



Aristophanes  
**THE FROGS**

Translated by  
GILBERT MURRAY





# THE FROGS

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The Frogs  
The Birds  
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ARISTOPHANES  
THE FROGS

Translated into English rhyming verse  
with Introduction and Notes

by  
GILBERT MURRAY

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## PREFACE

The *Frogs* is perhaps the funniest of all Aristophanes' comedies. There is nothing to surprise us in that. Aristophanes is always funny when dealing with Euripides. He was fascinated by him, always quoting him, advertising him, laughing at him or with him: indeed there was a word "to Euripidaristophanise" coined to describe his behaviour. But what is surprising is that the *Frogs* was also a very great success. It won the first prize, was specially admired and quoted, and was even given the special honour of a second performance a few days later—presumably because it was a play that needed study. Most of it was literary criticism. What a wonderful audience the Athenians of 405 B.C. must have been! It shows what strides the movement toward *Sophia* had made since the *Clouds* had proved a failure eighteen years before; and how deeply Aristophanes himself, while he mocked at it, was imbued with it.

The main plot is clear. In 405 Euripides was dead; and the world seemed empty and tasteless without him. That was the feeling of Dionysus, the divine patron of drama, and equally, we may be sure, of Aristophanes. Dionysus must have a poet; a real poet, creative and daring, able to make people sit up and think. He will go down to the very deep of Hades to call Euripides back. When he gets there, he finds a contest going on between Euripides and the ancient Aeschylus, now almost forgotten, who has held the Throne of Poetry ever since his death. Dionysus is appointed to judge between them. There is mutual criticism of general

style, of subjects, of prologues, of single verses, of political wisdom. In the end Dionysus does what, I think, most lovers of poetry would do. He gives up the attempt at a critical judgement and votes for what he instinctively loves—the old poetry that he first loved and learned as a boy. Your clever modern criticism is all very well, but it does not know everything.

It was really a situation more suited for tragedy or elegy than for farce, however intellectual. In the winter of 408-407 B.C. the aged Euripides had left Athens for the court of Macedonia, where the enlightened "tyrant" Archelaus was building up a great centre for distinguished men of letters from different parts of Greece. Euripides was too old to fight; Athens was in the last stages of a terrible war; and besides, in Athens people were "rejoicing over his misfortunes," so the ancient Life tells us, using a word closely equivalent to the German *Schadenfreude*. Why they rejoiced and over what "misfortunes" we do not know, though presumably he must have earned the hatred of the extreme democrats then dominant with their superstitions and feuds and war-mongering. He went, and had found enough peace in the mountains of Macedonia to write his inspired half-mystical tragedy, *The Bacchae*, when the news came to Athens at the beginning of 406 that he was dead. The right public comment was made by his great fellow-artist, Sophocles, who in the *Proagon*, or preliminary parade of his tragedies for that year, brought on his Chorus discrowned and in mourning. By the end of the year Sophocles also was dead. *The Bacchae* was produced and hailed as a masterpiece.

One reads of the outburst of grief throughout Europe at the death of Byron. There was something like it over the



death of Victor Hugo. But in both cases there were other poets left, and the next generation had other favourites. After 406 the three supreme masters of tragedy were gone, leaving none to fill their place, or even approach it, for nearly two thousand years. Well might Dionysus feel desolate.

Aristophanes shared or at least understood the feeling. But he was a comedian, writing for the regular Festival of the Old Comedy, which was a *Kômos*, a licensed revel, with a traditional ritual form. The general scheme of the performance was clear. Dionysus, the divine patron of drama, was an obvious comic figure. He was used to it, just as Heracles was. A journey to Hades, also, had more than once been a subject of comedy. The great men of past generations had often been called back to confound the miserable moderns. Then, further, a battle, or bandying of abuse, between two opposing sides was part of the regular ritual of the Old Comedy. There must be some rival to denounce Euripides. So much was fairly obvious. But who was it to be? Not Sophocles. Possibly he was not yet dead when Aristophanes began his play; in any case, after his beautiful tribute to Euripides he could not well be represented as snarling and jeering at him; "Good-tempered here, he'd be the same in Hell." Besides, Sophocles would not make the proper contrast; some of his later plays had been much influenced by Euripidean techniques. The proper antagonist to the sophisticated Euripides was the grand old genius who, as Sophocles put it, "did things right without knowing how," and who was dead before all these modern refinements were heard of.

How were the two poets to be represented? Both of course must be made ridiculous, and the old Marathon hero, who represented the triumphant age of Athens, unsoiled

by any contact with her modern controversies and humiliations, must in the end win. Also the argument must be conducted on plain common-sense lines; a comic writer can be philistine if he likes, but cannot afford to be esoteric and high-brow. He must see that Euripides always gets the worst of it, and that even his admirers cannot help laughing at him.

The characterisation of Aeschylus shows no great critical understanding. One does not criticise the poetry one learns as a child. The old Master is solemn, angry, rather inarticulate; that is easy enough but not very interesting. The parodies of his style, too, are rather clumsy and, so to speak, perfunctory. One cannot help feeling that Aristophanes never had that penetrating intimacy with Aeschylus' work which he had with that of Euripides. He can never touch Euripides without being funny.

It is worth considering what the criticism of Euripides really amounts to. Some learned men, otherwise sensible, have taken the play to be a quite serious attack on Euripides as a bad dramatist and an immoral writer. Bernhardt even described him as "the poet of ochlocracy," which is almost the opposite of the truth. He should have remembered that Euripides was known as the "scenic philosopher," the disciple of Anaxagoras; the solitary man who could be seen in his cave "always working and thinking, for he despised everything that was not great and high"; and whose plays were the only plays that induced Socrates to visit the theatre.

Clearly the "ochlocrat" line of criticism is wrong; yet the real attitude of Aristophanes to Euripides is hard to make out. Much of the attack seems to be intentionally philistine. The old pre-sophistic Aeschylus is no critic. He is almost

made to represent, or parody, the feelings of the average bourgeois who "knows what he likes," and still better what he does not like. Euripides showed little respect for the traditional legends about the gods. "The man is an atheist!" exclaims the bourgeois. He made subtle studies of female characters, not all of them virtuous. "Shocking! Such creatures ought not to be put on the stage, a bad example to everybody." He greatly extended the range of discussion and philosophical controversy: "He makes all kinds of people talk of subjects which they do not understand, and most of which are better not mentioned!" He showed various ingenuities of thought, of plot and of language. "Full of tricks and paradoxes! His line, 'Twas but my tongue, 'twas not my heart that swore,' is just a defence of perjury; the man will be defending pickpockets and burglars next!"

There is more truth in some of the gibes at Euripides' pursuit of *sophia* or sophistic culture. The great intellectual movement of the time was in thought towards enlightenment, in speech and writing towards lucidity. Euripides was an example of both, and one must admit that these admirable qualities are by no means always a help to poetry. His heroines do sometimes explain themselves too fully and efficiently; his prologues give us more information than we really want. Aeschylus' plays did not bore us with these long explanations. The truth probably is that Aeschylus could do without them because he was addressing a small city consisting mostly of true Athenians who knew the Attic legends as a matter of course. By the time of Euripides Athens was a large cosmopolitan city full of resident aliens and foreign visitors, who did not know what myth, or what version of a familiar myth, the poet would be using. Sophocles also took to prologues and explanations in his

later days. And Aristophanes does not actually complain of the prologues. He only represents Euripides as ridiculously proud of them.

In general, when a critic knows a poet's works by heart, and is always quoting and parodying them, it is a safe conclusion that he is fascinated by them. If the parodies are really good, that strengthens the argument. A man only parodies well what he really appreciates. In literature, I think we can be sure that Aristophanes enjoyed and admired Euripides; in politics also the two were, in general, on the same side; the main difference seems to have been that Euripides was a great champion of the new culture, new ideas, new rules of criticism, new techniques and experiments. Aristophanes was devoted to the old culture. And besides, novelties, especially if they can be treated as pretentious high-brow novelties, are the things that above all others tempt any comedian to mockery. The old-fashioned simplicity of Aeschylus, his lack of plot, his obscurity of language, even his sesquipedalian compounds, do not afford much material for laughter. He is not nearly so clever, not so *sophos*, as his opponent, that may be admitted. The one advantage that he really has is, line for line, the sheer weight or intensity of his poetry. Euripides has criticised, clarified, intellectualised too much. Aeschylus somehow weighs more, counts for more.

When the odds are so even in poetry itself, Dionysus turns to politics. Great poets possess great wisdom; what counsel do the two give respectively? What, for instance, about the "brilliant but traitorous Alcibiades? "A false citizen," says Euripides, "cast him out." "You have reared a young lion," says Aeschylus, "watch him but use him." Dionysus still cannot decide. He wants more. What general

steps do they advise to save Athens? Euripides knows: "Trust no longer in the scum that is now leading us; put your trust in the good men you have so long rejected." And Aeschylus? "Reform is no good. Such a distracted city can never reform itself. But it can at least do one thing. Man your ships and fight." The two counsels are different, almost opposite. Yet Aristophanes can hardly decide between them for he has himself, in the Parabasis, where the poet speaks in his own person, practically said both. First (695 ff.) "You gave civic rights to the slaves who fought in the galleys at Arginusae; do the same to your exiled fellow citizens. Reject no one who will fight at your side. That is the one thing that matters." So far the doctrine is pure Aeschylus; but the other soon follows: "Athens is using her base metal and neglecting her true gold. Change, and trust those who deserve your trust. They may still save us, and at worst,

If all is lost for good,  
Let the tree on which they hang us be at least of decent  
wood."

That is Euripides. In politics as in art the balance between the two is still equal, and where arguments are equal love must decide. And what Aristophanes loves is not so much one poet against another poet but one age against another age. His real love is the thing he loved and worshipped as a child. He had glorified it long ago in the great transformation scene of the *Knights*: the old Athens of Marathon, the City of the violet crown, she to whom war meant defence against the Barbarian, to whom all Greeks were friends and allies, she who was acclaimed as the "Saviour of Hellas". Apart from one outburst against his rival from Aeschylus

the angry poet, it is Aeschylus the soldier of Marathon, the fellow-soldier of Miltiades and Aristeides the Just, who is to return to life and enable Athens to "forget her long desolation."

THE FROGS  
OF  
ARISTOPHANES

## CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

THE GOD DIONYSUS

XANTHIAS, *his slave*

AESCHYLUS

EURIPIDES

HERACLES

PLUTO

CHARON

AEACUS, *house porter to Pluto*

A CORPSE

A MAIDSERVANT OF PERSEPHONE

A LANDLADY *in Hades*

PLATHANE, *her servant*

A CHORUS OF FROGS

A CHORUS OF INITIATED PERSONS

*Attendants at a Funeral; Women worshipping Iacchus;  
Servants of Pluto, &c.*

*"The play was first produced in Athens at the Feast of the Lenaea in the year 405 B.C. It obtained the first prize. Phrynichus was second with 'The Muses,' Plato third with 'The Cleophon.'"*

The numbers at the page heads refer to the lines in the original Greek.



## THE FROGS

*At the back of the scene is the house of HERACLES. Enter DIONYSUS, disguised as HERACLES, with lion-skin and club, but with the high boots of tragedy and tunic of saffron silk. He is followed by XANTHIAS, seated on a donkey and carrying an immense bale of luggage on a porter's pole. They advance for a while in silence.*

XANTHIAS

*(looking round at his burden with a groan)*

Sir, shall I say one of the regular things  
That people in a theatre always laugh at?

DIONYSUS

Say what you like, except "I'm overloaded."  
But mind, not that. That's simply wormwood to me.

XANTHIAS *(disappointed)*

Not anything funny?

DIONYSUS

Not "Oh, my poor blisters!"

XANTHIAS

Suppose I made the great joke?

DIONYSUS

Why, by all means.

Don't be afraid. Only, for mercy's sake,  
Don't . . .

XANTHIAS

Don't do what?

DIONYSUS

Don't shift your luggage pole  
And say, "O dear, I know something'll happen."

XANTHIAS (*greatly disappointed*)

Nor, that I've got such a weight upon my back  
That unless some one helps me quickly, it'll be too late?

DIONYSUS

Oh, please, no. Keep it till I need emetics.

XANTHIAS

Then what's the good of carrying all this lumber  
If I mayn't make one single good old wheeze  
Like Phrynichus, Ameipsias, and Lykis?

DIONYSUS

Ah no; don't make them.—When I sit down there  
[*Pointing to the auditorium.*]  
And hear some of those choice products, I go home  
A twelvemonth older.

XANTHIAS (*to himself*)

Oh, my poor old neck:  
Blistered all round, and mustn't say it's blistered,  
Because that's funny!

DIONYSUS

Airs and insolence!  
When I, the great Dionysus, Magnum-born.

Must work and walk myself, and have him riding  
Lest he should tire himself or carry things!

XANTHIAS

Am I not carrying things?

DIONYSUS

They're carrying you.

XANTHIAS (*showing the baggage*)

I'm carrying this.

DIONYSUS

How?

XANTHIAS

With my back half-broken.

DIONYSUS

That bag is clearly carried by a donkey.

XANTHIAS

No donkey carries bags that *I* am carrying.

DIONYSUS

I suppose you know the donkey's carrying *you*.

XANTHIAS (*turning cross*)

I don't. I only know my shoulder's sore!

DIONYSUS

Well, if it does no good to ride the donkey,  
Go turns, and let the poor beast ride on you.

XANTHIAS (*aside*)

Just like my luck.—Why wasn't I on board  
At Arginusae? Then I'd let you have it.

DIONYSUS

Dismount, you rascal.—Here's the door close by  
Where I must turn in first—and I on foot! (*Knocking.*)  
Porter! Hi, porter! Hi!

HERACLES (*entering from the house*)

Who's knocking there?

More like a mad bull butting at the door,  
Whoever he is . . . (*seeing DIONYSUS*). God bless us,  
what's all this?

[*He examines DIONYSUS minutely, then chokes with  
silent emotion.*]

DIONYSUS (*aside to XANTHIAS*)

Boy!

XANTHIAS

What, sir?

DIONYSUS

Did you notice?

XANTHIAS

Notice what?

DIONYSUS

The man's afraid.

XANTHIAS

Yes, sir; (*aside*) afraid you're cracked!

HERACLES (*struggling with laughter*)

I wouldn't if I possibly could help it:

I'm trying to bite my lips, but all the same . . . (*roars with  
laughter*).

DIONYSUS

Don't be absurd! Come here. I want something.

HERACLES

I would, but I can't yet shake this laughter off:  
The lion-skin on a robe of saffron silk!  
How comes my club to sort with high-heeled boots?  
What's the idea? Where have you come from now?

DIONYSUS

I've been at sea, serving with Cleisthenes.

HERACLES

You fought a battle?

DIONYSUS

Yes: sank several ships,  
Some twelve or thirteen.

HERACLES

Just you two?

DIONYSUS

Of course.

XANTHIAS (*aside*)

And then I woke, and it was all a dream!

DIONYSUS

Well, one day I was sitting there on deck  
Reading the *Andromeda*, when all at once  
A great desire came knocking at my heart,  
You'd hardly think . . .

HERACLES

A great desire? How big?

DIONYSUS

Oh, not so big. Perhaps as large as Molon.

HERACLES

Who was the lady?

DIONYSUS

Lady?

HERACLES

Well, the girl?

DIONYSUS

Great Heaven, there wasn't one!

HERACLES

Well, I have always  
Considered Cleisthenes a perfect lady!

DIONYSUS

Don't mock me, brother! It's a serious thing,  
A passion that has worn ~~me~~ to a shadow.

HERACLES

Well, tell us all about it.

DIONYSUS

*(with the despair of an artist-explaining himself to a  
common athlete)*

No; I can't.

You never . . . But I'll think of an analogy.  
You never felt a sudden inward craving  
For . . . pease-broth?

HERACLES

Pease-broth? Bless me, crowds of times.

DIONYSUS

See'st then the sudden truth? Or shall I put it  
Another way?

HERACLES

Oh, not about pease-broth.

I see it quite.

DIONYSUS

Well, I am now consumed  
By just that sort of restless craving for  
Euripides.

HERACLES

Lord save us, the man's dead!

DIONYSUS

He is; and no one in this world shall stop me  
From going to see him!

HERACLES

Down to the place of shades?

DIONYSUS

The place of shades or any shadier still.

HERACLES

What do you want to get?

DIONYSUS

I want a poet,  
For most be dead; only the false live on.

HERACLES

Iophon's still alive.

DIONYSUS

Well, there you have it;

The one good thing still left us, if it is one.  
For even as to that I have my doubts.

HERACLES

But say, why don't you bring up Sophocles  
By preference, if you must have some one back?

DIONYSUS

No, not till I've had Iophon quite alone  
And seen what note he gives without his father.  
Besides, Euripides, being full of tricks,  
Would give the slip to his master, if need were,  
And try to escape with me; while Sophocles,  
Good-tempered here, will be the same in Hell.

HERACLES

And Agathon, where is he?

DIONYSUS

Gone far away,  
A poet true, whom many friends regret.

HERACLES

Beshrew him! Where?

DIONYSUS

To feast with peaceful kings!

HERACLES

And Xenocles?

DIONYSUS

Oh, plague take Xenocles!

HERACLES

Pythangelus, then?

[DIONYSUS *sbrugs bis sboulders in expressive silence.*



XANTHIAS (*to himself*)

And no one thinks of me,  
When all my shoulder's skinning, simply skinning.

HERACLES

But aren't there other pretty fellows here  
All writing tragedies by tens of thousands,  
And miles verbosier than Euripides?

DIONYSUS

Leaves without fruit; trills in the empty air,  
And starling chatter, mutilating art!  
Give them one chance and that's the end of them,  
One weak assault on an unprotected Muse.  
Search as you will, you'll find no poet now  
With grit in him, to wake a word of power.

HERACLES

How "grit"?

DIONYSUS

The grit that gives them heart to risk  
Bold things—'vast Ether, residence of God,'  
Or Time's long foot, or souls that won't take oaths  
While tongues go swearing falsely by themselves.

HERACLES

You like that stuff?

DIONYSUS

Like it? I rave about it.

HERACLES (*reflecting*)

Why, yes; it's devilish tricky, as you say.

DIONYSUS

"Ride not upon my soul!" Use your own donkey.

HERACLES (*apologising*)

I only meant it was obviously humbug!

DIONYSUS

If ever I need advice about a *dinner*,  
I'll come to you!

XANTHIAS (*to himself*)

And no one thinks of me.

DIONYSUS

But why I came in these especial trappings—  
Disguised ■■ you, in fact—was this. I want you  
To tell me all the hosts with whom you stayed  
That time you went to fetch up Cerberus:  
Tell me your hosts, your harbours, bakers' shops,  
Inns, taverns—reputable and otherwise—  
Springs, roads, towns, posts, and landladies that keep  
The fewest fleas.

XANTHIAS (*as before*)

And no one thinks of me!

HERACLES (*impressively*)

Bold man, and will you dare . . .

DIONYSUS

Now, don't begin  
That sort of thing; but tell the two of us  
What road will take us quickest down to Hades.—  
And, please, no great extremes of heat or cold.

HERACLES

Well, which one had I better tell you first?—

Which now?—Ah, yes; suppose you got a boatman  
To tug you, with a hawser—round your neck . . .

DIONYSUS

A chokey sort of journey, that.

HERACLES

Well, then,

There *is* a short road, quick and smooth, the surface  
Well pounded—in a mortar.

DIONYSUS

The hemlock way?

HERACLES

Exactly.

DIONYSUS

Cold and bitter! Why, it freezes  
All your shins numb.

HERACLES

Do you mind one short and steep?

DIONYSUS

Not in the least . . . You know I'm ~~no~~ great walker.

HERACLES

Then just stroll down to Cerameicus . . .

DIONYSUS

Well?

HERACLES

Climb up the big tower . . .

DIONYSUS

Good; and then?

HERACLES

Then watch

And see them start the torch-race down below;  
 Lean over till you hear the man say "Go,"  
 And then, go.

DIONYSUS

Where?

HERACLES

Why, over.

DIONYSUS

Not for me.

It'd cost me two whole sausage bags of brains.  
 I won't go that way.

HERACLES

Well, how *will* you go?

DIONYSUS

The way *you* went that time.HERACLES (*impressively*)

The voyage is long.

You first come to a great mere, fathomless  
 And very wide.

DIONYSUS (*unimpressed*)

How do I get across?

HERACLES (*with a gesture*)

**L**a little boat, like that; an aged man  
 Will row you across the ferry . . . for two obols.

## DIONYSUS

Those two old obols, everywhere at work!  
I wonder how they found their way down there?

## HERACLES

Oh, Theseus took them!—After that you'll see  
Snakes and queer monsters, crowds and crowds.

## DIONYSUS

Now don't

Don't play at bogies! You can never move me!

## HERACLES

Then deep, deep mire and everlasting filth,  
And, wallowing there, such as have wronged a guest,  
Or picked a wench's pocket while they kissed her,  
Beaten their mothers, smacked their father's jaws,  
Or sworn perjurious oaths before high heaven.

## DIONYSUS

And with them, I should hope, such as have learned  
Kinesias's latest Battle Dance,  
Or copied out a speech of Morsimus!

## HERACLES

Then you will find a breath about your am  
Of music, and a light before your eyes  
Most beautiful—like this—and myrtle groves,  
And joyous throngs of women and of men,  
And clapping of glad hands.

## DIONYSUS

And who will *they* be?

HERACLES

The Initiated.

XANTHIAS (*aside*)

Yes; and I'm the donkey

Holiday-making at the Mysteries!

But I won't stand this weight one moment longer.

[*He begins to put down his bundle.*]

HERACLES

And they will forthwith tell you all you seek.

They have their dwelling just beside the road,

At Pluto's very door.—So now good-bye;

And a pleasant journey, brother.

DIONYSUS

Thanks; good-bye.

Take care of yourself. (*To XANTHIAS, while HERACLES returns into the house*) Take up the bags again.

XANTHIAS

Before I've put them down?

DIONYSUS

Yes, and be quick.

XANTHIAS

No, really, sir; we ought to hire a porter.

DIONYSUS

And what if I can't find one?

XANTHIAS

Then I'll go.

DIONYSUS

All right.—Why, here's a funeral, just in time.

[Enter a FUNERAL on the right.

Here, sir—it's you I'm addressing—the defunct;

Do you care to carry a few traps to Hades?

THE CORPSE (*sitting up*)

How heavy?

DIONYSUS

What you see.

CORPSE

You'll pay two drachmas?

DIONYSUS

Oh, come, that's rather much.

CORPSE

Bearers, move on!

DIONYSUS

My good man, wait! See if we can't arrange.

CORPSE

Two drachmas down, or else don't talk to me.

DIONYSUS

Nine obols?

CORPSE (*lying down again*)

Strike me living if I will!

[Exit the FUNERAL.

XANTHIAS

That dog's too proud! He'll come to a bad end.—

Well, I'll be porter.

DIONYSUS

That's a good brave fellow.

[*They walk on for some time. The scene changes,  
■ desolate lake taking the place of the house.*

DIONYSUS *peers into the distance.*

DIONYSUS

What *is* that?

XANTHIAS

That? A lake.

DIONYSUS

By Zeus, it is!

The ~~mere~~ he spoke of.

XANTHIAS

Yes; I see a boat.

DIONYSUS

Yes; by the powers!

XANTHIAS

And yonder must be Charon.

DIONYSUS

Charon, ahoy!

BOTH

Ahoy! Charon, ahoy!

CHARON

(*approaching in the boat. He is ■ old, grim, and squalid  
Ferryman, wearing a slave's felt cap and ■ sleeveless tunic*)

Who's for repose from sufferings and cares?

Who's for the Carrion Crows, and the Dead Donkeys;

Lethe and Sparta and the rest of Hell?



DIONYSUS

I!

CHARON

Get in.

DIONYSUS

You said? Where do you touch? The Carrion Crows,

CHARON (*gruffly*)

The Dogs will be the place for you.

Get in.

DIONYSUS

Come, Xanthias.

CHARON

I don't take slaves:  
Unless he has won his freedom? Did he fight  
The battle of the Cold Meat Unpreserved?

XANTHIAS

Well, no; my eyes were very sore just then . . .

CHARON

Then trot round on your legs!

XANTHIAS

Where shall I meet you?

CHARON

At the Cold Seat beside the Blasting Stone.

DIONYSUS (*to XANTHIAS, who hesitates*)

You understand?

XANTHIAS

Oh, quite. (*Aside*) Just like my luck.  
What can have crossed me when I started out?

[*Exit* XANTHIAS.]

CHARON

Sit to your oar (*DIONYSUS does his best to obey*). Any more  
passengers?

If so, make haste. (*To DIONYSUS*) What are you doing  
there?

DIONYSUS

Why, what you told me; sitting on my oar.

CHARON

Oh, are you? Well, get up again and sit

[*Pushing him down.*]

Down there—fatty!

DIONYSUS (*doing everything wrong*)

Like that?

CHARON

Put out your arms

And stretch . . .

DIONYSUS

Like that? .

CHARON

None of your nonsense here!

Put both your feet against the stretcher.—Now,  
In good time, row!

DIONYSUS (*fluently putting down his oars*)

And how do you expect

A man like me, with no experience,  
No seamanship, no Salamis,—to row?

CHARON

You'll row all right; as soon as you fall to,  
You'll hear a first-rate tune that *makes* you row.

DIONYSUS

Who sings it?

CHARON

Certain cyncnoranidae.

That's music!

DIONYSUS

Give the word then, and we'll see.

[CHARON *gives the word for rowing and marks the time. A Chorus of FROGS under the water is heard. The Feast of Pots to which they refer was the third day of the Anthesteria, and included songs to DIONYSUS at his temple in the district called Limnae ("Marshes").*

FROGS

O brood of the mere and the spring,  
Gather together and sing  
From the depths of your throat  
By the side of the boat,  
Co-äx, as we move in a ring;

As in Limnae we sang the divine  
Nyseian Giver of Wine,  
When the people in lots  
With their sanctified Pots  
Came reeling around my shrine.

Co/äx, co/äx, co/äx,  
Brekekekex co/äx.

DIONYSUS

Don't sing any more;  
I begin to be sore!

FROGS

Brekekekex co/äx.

Co/äx, co/äx, co/äx,  
Brekekekex co/äx!

DIONYSUS

Is it nothing to you  
If I'm black and I'm blue?

FROGS

Brekekekex co/äx!

DIONYSUS

A plague on all of your swarming packs.  
There's nothing in you except co/äx!

FROGS

Well, and what more do you need?  
Though it's none of your business indeed,  
When the Muse thereanent  
Is entirely content,  
And horny-hoof Pan with his reed:  
When Apollo is fain to admire  
My voice, on account of his lyre  
Which he frames with the rushes  
And watery bushes—  
Co/äx!—which I grow in the mire.

Co/äx, co/äx, co/äx,  
Brekekekex co/äx!

DIONYSUS

Peace, musical sisters!  
I'm covered with blisters.

FROGS

Brekekekex co/äx!

Co/äx, co/äx, co/äx,  
Brekekekex co/äx!

Our song we can double  
Without the least trouble:  
Brekekekex co/äx!

Sing we now, if ever hopping  
Through the sedge and flowering rushes;  
In and out the sunshine flopping,  
We have sported, rising, dropping,  
With our song that nothing hushes.

Sing, if e'er in days of storm  
Safe our native oozes bore us,  
Staved the rain off, kept us warm,  
Till we set our dance in form,  
Raised our hubble-bubbling chorus:

Brekekekex co/äx, co/äx!

DIONYSUS

Brekekekex co/äx, co/äx!  
I can sing it ■ loud as you.

FROGS

Sisters, that he never must do!

DIONYSUS

Would you have me row till my shoulder cracks?

FROGS

Brekekekex co·äx, co·äx!

DIONYSUS

Brekekekex co·äx, co·äx!

Groan away till you burst your backs.

It's nothing to me.

FROGS

Just wait till you see.

DIONYSUS

I don't care how you scold.

FROGS

Then all day long

We will croak you a song

As loud as our throats can hold.

Brekekekex co·äx, co·äx!!

DIONYSUS

Brekekekex co·äx, co·äx!!

I'll see you don't outdo me in that.

FROGS

Well, *you* shall never beat *us*—that's flat!

DIONYSUS

I'll make you cease your song

If I shout for it all day long;

My lungs I'll tax

With co·äx, co·äx

—I assure you they're thoroughly strong—

Until your efforts at last relax:  
Brekekekex co-äx, co-äx!!

[*No answer from the Frogs.*

Brekekekex co-äx, co-äx!!!

I knew in the end I should stop your quacks!

[*The boat has now reached the farther shore.*

CHARON

Easy there! Stop her! Lay her alongside.—  
Now pay your fare and go.

DIONYSUS

There are the obols.

[*DIONYSUS gets out. The boat and CHARON disappear.*

*DIONYSUS peers about him.*

Ho, Xanthias! . . . Where's Xanthias?—Is that you?

XANTHIAS (*from the darkness*)

Hullo!

DIONYSUS

Come this way.

XANTHIAS (*entering*)

Oh, I'm glad to see you!

DIONYSUS (*looking round*)

Well, and what have we here?

XANTHIAS

Darkness—and mud.

DIONYSUS

Did you see any of the perjurers here,  
And father-beaters, as he said we should?

XANTHIAS

Why, didn't you?

DIONYSUS

I? Lots.

[*Looking full at the audience.*

I ~~see~~ them now.

Well, what are we to do?

XANTHIAS

Move further on.

This is the place he said was all aswarm  
With horrid beasts.

DIONYSUS

A plague on what he said!

Exaggerating just to frighten me,  
Because he knew my courage and was jealous.  
Naught lives so flown with pride as Heracles!  
Why, my best wish would be to meet with something,  
Some real adventure, worthy of our travels!

XANTHIAS (*listening*)

Stay!—Yes, upon my word. I hear a noise.

DIONYSUS (*nervously*)

God bless me, where?

XANTHIAS

Behind.

DIONYSUS

Go to the rear.

XANTHIAS

No; it's in front somewhere.



DIONYSUS

Then get in front.

XANTHIAS

Why, there I see it.—Save us!—A great beast. . . .

DIONYSUS

What like?

XANTHIAS

Horrid! . . . At least it keeps on changing!  
It was a bull; now it's a mule; and now  
A fair young girl.

DIONYSUS

Where is it? Let me at it!

XANTHIAS

Stay, sir; it's not a girl now, it's a dog.

DIONYSUS

It must be Empusa!

XANTHIAS

Yes. At least its head

Is all on fire.

DIONYSUS

Has it a leg of brass?

XANTHIAS

Yes, that it has. And the other leg of cow-dung.  
It's she!

DIONYSUS

Where shall I go?

XANTHIAS

Well, where shall I?

DIONYSUS

(*running forward and addressing the Priest of DIONYSUS in his seat of state in the centre of the front row of the audience*)

My Priest, protect ~~me~~ and we'll sup together!

XANTHIAS

We're done for, O Lord Heracles.

DIONYSUS (*cowering again*)

Oh, don't!

Don't shout like that, man, and don't breathe that name.

XANTHIAS

Dionysus, then!

DIONYSUS

No, no. That's worse than the other. . . .  
Keep on the way you're going.

XANTHIAS (*after searching about*)

Come along, sir.

DIONYSUS

What is it?

XANTHIAS

Don't be afraid, sir. All goes well.  
And we can say as said Hegelochus,  
"Beyond these storms I catch a *piece of tail!*"  
Empusa's gone.

DIONYSUS

Swear it.

XANTHIAS

By Zeus, she's gone!

DIONYSUS

Again.

XANTHIAS

By Zeus, she's gone!

DIONYSUS

Your solemn oath.

XANTHIAS

By Zeus!!

DIONYSUS (*raising himself*)

Dear me, that made me feel quite pale.

XANTHIAS (*pointing to the Priest*)

And this kind gentleman turned red for sympathy.

DIONYSUS

How can I have sinned to bring all this upon me?  
What power above is bent on my destruction?

XANTHIAS

The residence of God, or Time's long foot?

DIONYSUS (*listening as flute-playing is heard outside*)

I say!

XANTHIAS

What is it?

DIONYSUS

Don't you hear it?

XANTHIAS

What?

DIONYSUS

Flutes blowing.

XANTHIAS

Yes. And such a smell of torches  
Floating towards us, all most Mystery-like!

DIONYSUS

Crouch quietly down and let us hear the music.

*[They crouch down at the left. Music is heard far off.]*

XANTHIAS puts down the bundle.

CHORUS (*unseen*)

Iacchus, O Iacchus!

Iacchus, O Iacchus!

XANTHIAS

That's it, sir. These are the Initiated  
Rejoicing somewhere here, just as he told us.  
Why, it's the old Iacchus hymn that used  
To warm the cockles of Diagoras!

DIONYSUS

Yes, it must be. However, we'd best sit  
Quite still and listen, till we're sure of it.

*[There enters gradually the CHORUS, consisting of Men Initiated in the Eleusinian Mysteries. They are led by a HIEROPHANT or Initiating Priest, and accompanied by a throng of Worshipping Women. They have white robes, wreaths upon their brows, and torches in their hands. During their entrance the back scene again changes. The lake disappears and we find ourselves in front of the house of Pluto.]*

## CHORUS

Thou that dwellest in the shadow  
 Of great glory here beside us,  
 Spirit, Spirit, we have hied us  
 To thy dancing in the meadow!  
 Come, Iacchus; let thy brow  
 Toss its fruited myrtle bough;  
 We are thine, O happy dancer; O our comrade, come and  
 guide us!

Let the mystic measure beat:  
 Come in riot fiery fleet;  
 Free and holy all before thee,  
 While the Charites adore thee,  
 And thy Mystae wait the music of thy feet!

## XANTHIAS

O Virgin of Demeter, highly blest,  
 What an entrancing smell of roasted pig!

## DIONYSUS

Hush! hold your tongue! Perhaps they'll give you  
 some.

## CHORUS

Spirit, Spirit, lift the shaken  
 Splendour of thy tossing torches!  
 All the meadow flashes, scorches:  
 Up, Iacchus, and awaken!  
 Come, thou star that bringest light  
 To the darkness of our rite,  
 Till thine old men leap as young men, leap with every  
 thought forsaken

Of the dullness and the fear  
 Left by many a circling year:  
 Let thy red light guide the dances  
 Where thy banded youth advances  
 To be merry by the blossoms of the mere!

[*All the CHORUS has now entered.*]

HIEROPHANT

Hush, oh hush! for our song begins. Let every one stand  
 aside

Who owns an intellect muddled with sins, or in arts like  
 these untried:

If the mystic rites of the Muses true he has never seen nor  
 sung:

If he never the magical music knew of Cratînus the Bull-  
 eater's tongue:

If he likes in a comedy nothing but riot and meaningless  
 harlequinade:

Or in matters of politics cannot keep quiet and ~~see~~ that  
 cabals be allayed,

But blows up spite and keeps it alight to serve his personal  
 ends:

Or being in power at a critical hour, accepts little gifts  
 from his friends:

Or goes selling a ship, or betraying a fort, or takes to the  
 trade of a smuggler,

Attempting again, in Thorycion's sort,—that pestilent  
 revenue-juggler,—

From Aegina before us to stock Epidarus with tar and  
 canvas and hide,

Or tries to persuade some friend in the trade for the enemy's  
 ships to provide:

Or a teacher of choirs who forgets his position and damages  
Hecate's shrines:

Or the robber of poets, the ~~man~~ politician, who spites us  
with pitiful fines

Because we have suitably made him absurd in the God's  
traditional rhyme:

Behold, I give word: and again give word: and give word  
for the third, last time:

Make room, all such, for our dance and song.—Up, you,  
and give us a lay

That is meet for our mirth-making all night long and for  
this great festival day.

#### CHORUS

Forth fare all;  
This mead's bowers  
Bear fresh flowers;  
Forth, I call.

Leap, mock, dance, play;  
Enough and to spare we have feasted to-day!

March: raise high  
Her whose hands  
Save these lands;  
Raise due cry:  
Maid, Maid, save these,  
Tho' it may not exactly Thorycion please!

#### HIEROPHANT

One hymn to the Maiden; now raise ye another  
To the Queen of the Fruits of the Earth.  
To Demeter the Corn-giver, Goddess and Mother,  
Make worship in musical mirth.

## CHORUS

Approach, O Queen of orgies pure,  
 And us, thy faithful band, ensure  
 From morn to eve to ply secure  
 Our mocking and our clowning:  
 To grace thy feast with many a hit  
 Of merry jest or serious wit,  
 And laugh, and earn the prize, and flit  
 Triumphant to the crowning.

## HIEROPHANT

Now call the God of blooming mien;  
 Raise the mystic chorus:  
 Our comrade he and guide unseen,  
 With ■ and before us.

## CHORUS

Iacchus high in glory, thou whose day  
 Of all is merriest, hither, help our play;  
 Show, as we throne thee at thy Maiden's side,  
 How light to thee are our long leagues of way.  
 Iacchus, happy dancer, be our guide.  
 Thyself, that poorest men thy joy should share,  
 Didst rend thy robe, thy royal sandal tear,  
 That feet unshod might dance, and robes rent wide  
 Wave in thy revel with no after care.  
 Iacchus, happy dancer, be our guide.  
 Lo there! but now across the dance apace  
 A maiden tripped, a maiden fair of face,  
 Whose tattered smock and kerchief scarce could hide  
 The merry bosom peering from its place.  
 Iacchus, happy dancer, be our guide.



## XANTHIAS

I always liked to follow some one else:  
Suppose we join and dance?

## DIONYSUS

Why, so say I.  
[*They join the Dance.*]

## HIEROPHANT

[*These verses satirise Archedêmus, the politician, who has never succeeded in making out a clear Athenian pedigree for himself; Cleisthenes, who went into mourning for imaginary relatives lost at Arginusae; and Callias, the lady-killer, who professed a descent from Heracles, and wore a lion-skin in token thereof.*]

Perhaps 'twill best beseem us  
To deal with Archedêmus,  
Who is toothless still and rootless, at seven years from  
birth:

## CHORUS

Yet he leads the public preachers  
Of those poor dead upper creatures,  
And is prince of all the shadiness on earth!

## HIEROPHANT

And Cleisthenes, says rumour,  
In a wild despairing humour  
Sits huddled up and tearing out his hair among the  
graves.

## CHORUS

To believe he would incline us  
That a person named Sebînus  
Is tossing yet unburied on the waves!

## HIEROPHANT

While Callias, says tattle,  
Has attended a sea-battle,  
And lionesses' scalps were the uniform he wore!

DIONYSUS (*to the* HIEROPHANT)

You'd oblige us much by telling  
Me the way to Pluto's dwelling.  
We are strangers newly lighted on your shore.

## HIEROPHANT

No need of distant travel  
That problem to unravel;  
For know that while you ask me, you are standing at  
the door.

DIONYSUS (*to* XANTHIAS)

Then up, my lad, be packing!

## XANTHIAS

There's the Devil in the sacking:  
It can't stay still a second on the floor!

## HIEROPHANT

Now onward through Demeter's ring  
Through the leaves and flowers,  
All who love her junketing,  
All who know her powers!

Fare forward you, while I go here  
 With matron and with maiden,  
 To make their night-long roaming clear  
 With tossing torches laden.

CHORUS (*of Worshipping Women, as they file off*)

Then on 'mid the meadows deep,  
 Where thickest the rosebuds creep  
 And the dewdrops are pearliest:  
 A jubilant step advance  
 In our own, our eternal dance,  
 Till its joy the Glad Fates entrance  
 Who threaded it earliest.

For ours is the sunshine bright,  
 Yea, ours is the joy of light  
 All pure, without danger:  
 For we thine Elect have been,  
 Thy secrets our eyes have seen,  
 And our hearts we have guarded clean  
 Toward kinsman and stranger!

*The HIEROPHANT and the Worshipping Women go off. The Men remain, forming an ordinary Chorus. DIONYSUS approaches the central door.*

DIONYSUS

I ought by rights to knock; but how, I wonder.  
 I don't know how they do knock in this country.

XANTHIAS

Oh, don't waste time. Go in and do your best,  
 Like Heracles in heart as well as garb.

DIONYSUS (*knocking*)

Ho there!

[*The door opens and a Porter appears, whose dress shows him to be AEACUS, the Judge of the Dead.*]

AEACUS

Who summons?

DIONYSUS

Heracles the Brave.

AEACUS

Thou rash, impure, and most abandoned man,  
 Foul, inly foul, yea foulest upon earth,  
 Who harried our dog, Kerberus, choked him dumb,  
 Fled, vanished, and left me to bear the blame,  
 Who kept him!—Now I have thee on the hip!  
 So close the black encaverned rocks of Styx  
 And Acheronian crags a-drip with blood  
 Surround thee, and Cocÿtus' circling hounds;  
 Now shall the hundred-headed serpent rend  
 Thy bowels asunder; to thy lungs shall cleave  
 The lamprey of Tartessus, and thy reins  
 And inmost entrails in one paste of gore  
 Teithrasian Gorgons gorge for evermore!  
 —To whom, even now, I speed my indignant course!

[*The Porter retires.*]

DIONYSUS (*who has fallen prostrate*)

Please!

XANTHIAS

What's the matter? Quick, get up again  
 Before they come and see you.

DIONYSUS

But I feel

Faint.—Put ■ cold wet sponge against my heart.

XANTHIAS (*producing ■ sponge*)

There; you apply it.

DIONYSUS

Thanks. Where is it?

XANTHIAS

°There.

[DIONYSUS *takes and applies it.*

Ye golden gods, is it there you keep your heart?

DIONYSUS

The nervous shock made it go down and down!

XANTHIAS

You *are* the greatest coward I ever saw,  
Of gods or humans!

DIONYSUS

I a coward?—I had

The presence of mind to ask you for a sponge.  
Few had done more!

XANTHIAS

Could any one do less?

DIONYSUS

A coward would still be flat there, sniffing salts;  
I rose, called for a sponge, and used the sponge.

XANTHIAS

That *was* brave, by Poseidon!

DIONYSUS

I should think so.—

And weren't *you* frightened at his awful threats  
And language?

XANTHIAS

I? I never cared a rap.

DIONYSUS

Oh, you're a hero, aren't you?—and want glory.  
Well, you be *me*! Put on this lion's hide  
And take the club—if you're so dauntless-hearted.  
I'll take my turn, and be your luggage-boy.

XANTHIAS

Over with both of them! Of course I will.

*[He proceeds to put on the lion-skin.]*

Now watch if Xanthias-Heracles turns faint,  
Or shows the same "presence of mind," as you.

DIONYSUS

The true Melitêan jail-bird, on my life! . . .  
Well, I suppose I'd better take the luggage.

*[The exchange is just effected when the door again  
opens and there enters a MAID OF PERSE-  
PHONE.]*

MAID

Dear Heracles, and is it you once more?  
Come in! No sooner did my mistress learn  
Your coming, than she set her bread to bake,  
Set pots of split-pea porridge, two or three,  
A-boiling, a whole ox upon the coals,  
Cakes in the oven, and big buns.—Oh, come in.

XANTHIAS (*as HERACLES*)

She is very kind; perhaps some other time.

MAID

Oh, really; but I mustn't let you go!  
She's doing everything herself! Braised game,  
Spices and fruits and stoups of the sweetest wine—  
Come in with me.

XANTHIAS

Most kind, but . . .

MAID

No excuses.

I won't let go.—A flute-player, very pretty,  
Is waiting for you, and two or three such sweet  
Young dancing girls.

XANTHIAS (*wavering*)

Did you say dancing girls?

MAID

Yes. Do come in.—They just were going to serve  
The fish, and have the table lifted in.

XANTHIAS

I will! I'll chance it!—Go straight in and tell  
Those dancing girls that Heracles is coming!

[*The MAID retires again.*]

Here, boy, take up the bags and follow me.

DIONYSUS

Stop, please!—You didn't take it seriously  
When I just dressed you as Heracles for fun?  
You can't be so ridiculous, Xanthias.  
Take up the bags at once and bring them in.

XANTHIAS

What? Surely you don't mean to take away  
Your own gift?

DIONYSUS

Mean it? No; I'm doing it!  
Off with that lion-skin, quick.

*[Begins to strip off the lion-skin by force.]*

XANTHIAS

Help! I'm assaulted . . .

*[Giving way.]*

I leave it with the Gods!

DIONYSUS (*proceeding to dress himself again*)

The Gods, indeed!

What senseless vanity to expect to be  
Alcmena's son, a mortal and a slave!

XANTHIAS

Well, take it. I don't care.—The time may be,  
God willing, when you'll feel the need of me!

CHORUS

That's the way such points to settle,  
Like a chief of tested mettle,

Weather-worn on many seas,

Not in one fixed pattern stopping,  
Like a painted thing, but dropping

Always towards the side of ease.

'Tis this instinct for soft places,

To keep warm while others freeze

Marks a man of gifts and graces

Like our own Theramenes!



## DIONYSUS

Surely 'twould the matter worsen,  
 If I saw this low-bred person  
     On his cushions sprawling, so,  
 Served him drinking, watched him winking:  
 If he knew what I was thinking—  
     And he would, for certain, know,  
 Being a mighty shrewd deviser  
 Of such fancies—with a blow  
 P'raps he'd loosen an incisor  
     From the forefront of my row!\*

[*During this song there has entered along the street a  
 LANDLADY, who is soon followed by her servant,  
 PLATHANÊ.*

## LANDLADY

Ho, Plathanê, here, I want you, Plathanê! . . .  
 Here is that scamp who came to the inn before,  
 Ate sixteen loaves of bread. . . .

## PLATHANÊ

Why, so it is:

The very man!

XANTHIAS (*aside*)

Here's fun for somebody.

## LANDLADY

And twenty plates of boiled meat, half-an-obol  
 At every gulp!

XANTHIAS (*as before*)

Some one'll catch it now!

## LANDLADY

And all that garlic.

DIONYSUS

Nonsense, my good woman,  
You don't know what you're saying.

PLATHANÊ

Did you think  
I wouldn't know you in those high-heeled boots?

LANDLADY

And all the salt-fish I've not mentioned yet. . . .

PLATHANÊ (*to LANDLADY*)

No, you poor thing; and all the good fresh cheese  
The man kept swallowing, and the baskets with it!

LANDLADY (*to XANTHIAS*)

And when he saw me coming for the money  
Glared like a wild bull! Yes, and roared at me!

XANTHIAS

Just what he does! His manners everywhere.

LANDLADY

Tugged at his sword! Pretended to be mad!

PLATHANÊ

Yes, you poor thing; I don't know how you bore it!

LANDLADY

And we got all of a tremble, both of us,  
And ran up the ladder to the loft! And he,  
He tore the matting up—and off he went!

XANTHIAS

Like him, again.

PLATHANÊ

But something must be done!

LANDLADY (*to PLATHANÊ*)

Run, you, and fetch ■■ my protector, Cleon.

PLATHANÊ

(*to the LANDLADY, as they run excitedly to go off in different directions*)

And you fetch me Hyperbolus, if you meet him. . . .  
Then we shall crush him!

LANDLADY (*returning*)

Oh, that ugly jaw!  
If I could throw a stone, I'd like to break  
Those wicked teeth that ground my larder dry!

PLATHANÊ (*returning on the other side*)

And I should like to fling you in the pit!

LANDLADY (*turning again as she goes off*)

And I should like to get a scythe, and cut  
That throat that swallowed all my sausages.

PLATHANÊ (*the same*)

Well, I'll go straight to Cleon, and this same day  
We'll worm them out in a law-court, come what may!

[*The LANDLADY and PLATHANÊ go off in different directions. A painful silence ensues At Length:*

DIONYSUS

Plague take me! No friend left me in the world. . . .  
Except old Xanthias!

XANTHIAS

I know, I know!

We all see what you want. But that's enough!  
I won't be Heracles.

DIONYSUS

Now don't say that,

Xanthias—old boy!

XANTHIAS

And how am I to be

Alcmena's son—a mortal and a slave?

DIONYSUS

I know you're angry, and quite justly so.  
Hit me if you like; I won't say one word back.  
But, mark, if ever again in this wide world  
I rob you of these clothes, destruction fall  
On me myself, my wife, my little ones,—  
And, if you like, on the old bat Archedêmus!

XANTHIAS

That oath will do. I take it on those terms.

CHORUS

Now 'tis yours to make repayment  
For the honour of this raiment;  
Wear it well, as erst you wore;  
If it needs some renovating,  
Think of whom you're personating,  
Glare like Heracles and roar.  
Else, if any fear you show, sir,  
Any weakness at the core.  
Any jesting, back you go, sir,  
To the baggage as before!

## XANTHIAS

Thank you for your kind intention,  
 But I had some comprehension  
     Of the task I undertook.  
 Should the lion-skin make for profit,  
 He'll attempt to make me doff it—  
     That I know—by hook or crook.  
 Still I'll make my acting real,  
     Peppery gait and fiery look.  
 Ha! Here comes the great ordeal:  
     See the door. I'm sure it shook!

*The central door opens and the Porter, AEACUS, comes out with several ferocious-looking Thracian or Scythian constables.*

## AEACUS

Here, seize this dog-stealer and lead him forth  
 To justice, quick.

DIONYSUS (*imitating XANTHIAS*)

Here's fun for somebody.

XANTHIAS (*in a Heracleian attitude*)

Stop, zounds! Not one step more!

## AEACUS

You want to fight?

Ho, Ditylas, Skeblyas, and Pardokas,  
 Forward! Oblige this person with some fighting!

## DIONYSUS

(*while the constables gradually overpower XANTHIAS*)

How shocking to assault the constables—  
 And stealing other people's things!

AEACUS

Unnatural,

That's what I call it.

DIONYSUS

Quite a pain to see.

XANTHIAS (*now overpowered and disarmed*)

Now, by Lord Zeus, if ever I've been here

Or stol'n from you the value of one hair,

You may take and hang me on the nearest tree! . . .

Now, listen and I'll act quite fairly by you;

[*Suddenly indicating* DIONYSUS.

Take this poor boy, and put him to the question!

And if you find me guilty, hang me straight.

AEACUS

What tortures do you allow?

XANTHIAS

Use all you like.

Tie him in the ladder, hang him by the feet,

Whip off his skin with bristle-whips and rack him;

You might well try some vinegar up his nose,

And bricks upon his chest, and so on. Only

No scourges made of . . . leek or young shalott.

AEACUS

A most frank offer, most frank.—If my treatment

Disables him, the value shall be paid.

XANTHIAS

Don't mention it. Remove him and begin.

AEACUS

Thank you, we'll do it here, that you may witness  
Exactly what he says. (*To DIONYSUS*) Put down your  
bundle,  
And mind you tell the truth.

DIONYSUS

(*who has hitherto been speechless with horror, now bursting  
out*).

I warn all present.

To torture me is an illegal act,  
Being immortal! And whoever does so  
Must take the consequences.

AEACUS

Why, who *are* you?

DIONYSUS

The immortal Dionysus, son of Zeus;  
And this my slave.

AEACUS (*to XANTHIAS*)

You hear his protest?

XANTHIAS

Yes;

All the more reason, that, for whipping him;  
If he's a real immortal he won't feel it.

DIONYSUS

Well, but you claim to be immortal too;  
They ought to give you just the same as me.

XANTHIAS

That's fair enough. All right; whichever of us  
You first find crying, or the least bit minding  
Your whip, you're free to say he's ~~no~~ true god.

AEACUS

Sir, you behave like a true gentleman;  
You come to justice of yourself!—Now then,  
Strip, both.

XANTHIAS

How will you test us?

AEACUS

Easily:  
You'll each take whack and whack about.

XANTHIAS

All right.

AEACUS (*striking XANTHIAS*)

There.

XANTHIAS (*controlling himself with an effort*)  
Watch now, if you see me even wince.

AEACUS

But I've already hit you!

XANTHIAS

I think not.

AEACUS

Upon my word, it looks as if I hadn't.  
Well, now I'll go and whack the other.

[*Strikes* DIONYSUS.

DIONYSUS (*also controlling himself*)

When?

AEACUS

I've done it.

DIONYSUS (*with an air of indifference*)  
Odd, it didn't make me sneeze!



AEACUS

It is odd!—Well, I'll try the first again.

[*He crosses to XANTHIAS.*

XANTHIAS

All right. Be quick. (*The blow falls*) Whe-ew!

AEACUS

Ah, why "whe-ew"?

It didn't hurt you?

XANTHIAS (*recovering himself*)

No; I just was thinking  
When my Diomean Feast would next be due.

AEACUS

A holy thought!—I'll step across again.

[*Strikes DIONYSUS, who howls.*

DIONYSUS

Ow-ow!

AEACUS

What's that?

DIONYSUS (*recovering himself*)

I saw some cavalry.

AEACUS

What makes your eyes run?

DIONYSUS

There's a smell of onions!

AEACUS

You're sure it didn't hurt you?

DIONYSUS

Hurt? Not it.

AEACUS

I'll step across again then to the first one.

[*Strikes XANTHIAS, who also bowls.*]

XANTHIAS

Hi-i!

AEACUS

What is it now?

XANTHIAS

Take out that thorn.

[*Pointing to his foot.*]

AEACUS

What does it mean?—Over we go again.

[*Strikes DIONYSUS.*]

DIONYSUS

(*hurriedly turning his wail into a line of poetry*)

O Lord! . . . "of Delos or of Pytho's rock."

XANTHIAS (*triumphantly*)

It hurts. You heard?

DIONYSUS

It doesn't! I was saying

A verse of old Hippônax to myself.

XANTHIAS

You're making nothing of it. Hit him hard

Across the soft parts underneath the ribs.

AEACUS (*to XANTHIAS*)

A good idea! Turn over on your back!

[*Strikes him.*]

XANTHIAS (*as before*)

O Lord!

DIONYSUS

It hurts!

XANTHIAS (*as though continuing*)

"Poseidon ruler free  
Of cliffs Aegean and the grey salt sea."

AEACUS

Now, by Demeter, it's beyond my powers  
To tell which one of you's a god!—Come in;  
We'll ask my master. He and Persephassa  
Will easily know you, being gods themselves.

DIONYSUS

Most wisely said. Indeed I could have wished  
You'd thought of that before you had me swished.

[*They all go into the house. The CHORUS, left alone in  
the stage, turns towards the audience.*]

CHORUS

*Semi-Chorus I*

Draw near, O Muse, to the spell of my song,  
Set foot in the sanctified place,  
And see thy faithful Athenians throng,  
To whom the myriad arts belong,  
The myriad marks of grace,

Greater than Cleophon's own,  
On whose lips, with bilingual moan,  
A swallow from Thrace  
Has taken his place  
And chirps in blood-curdling tone

On the Gibberish Tree's thick branches high  
 As he utters a nightingale note,  
 A tumultuous cry  
 That he's certain to die  
 Even with an equal vote!

*One of the Leaders*

It behoves this sacred Chorus, in its wisdom and its bliss,  
 To assist the state with counsel. Now our first advice is  
 this.

"Let Athenians all stand equal; penal laws be swept  
 away.

Some of us have been misguided, following Phrynichus  
 astray;

Now for all of these, we urge you, let full freedom be  
 decreed

To confess the cause that tripped them and blot out that  
 old misdeed.

Next, no man should live in Athens outcast, robbed of  
 every right.

Shame it is that low-born aliens, just for sharing one sea-  
 fight,

Should forthwith become 'Plataeans' and instead of slaves  
 be masters—

(Not that in the least I blame you for thus meeting our  
 disasters;

No; I pay respectful homage to the one wise thing you've  
 done);

But remember these men also, your own kinsmen, sire and  
 son,

Who have oftimes fought beside you, spilt their blood on  
 many seas:

Grant for that one fault the pardon which they crave you  
on their knees.  
You whom Nature made for wisdom, let your vengeance  
fall to sleep;  
Greet as kinsmen and Athenians, burghers true to win and  
keep,  
Whosoe'er will brave the storms and fight for Athens at  
your side!  
But be sure, if still we spurn them, if we wrap us in our  
pride,  
Stand alone, with Athens tossing in the long arm of the  
waves,  
Men in days to come shall wonder, and not praise you in  
your graves.

*Semi-Chorus II*

An' I the make of a man may trow,  
And the ways that lead to a fall,  
Not long will the ape that troubles us now,  
Not long little Cleigenes—champion, I vow,  
Of rascally washermen all,

Who hold over soap their sway  
And lye and Cimolian clay,  
(Which they thriftily mix  
With the scrapings of bricks)—  
Not long will our little one stay!  
Oh, 'tis well he is warlike and ready to kick  
For if once home from supper he trotted,  
Talking genially thick  
And without his big stick,  
We should probably find him garotted.

*The Other Leader*

It has often struck our notice that the course our city runs  
 Is the same towards men and money.—She has true and  
     worthy sons:  
 She has good and ancient silver, she has good and recent  
     gold.  
 These are coins untouched with alloys; everywhere their  
     fame is told;  
 Not all Hellas holds their equal, not all Barbary far and  
     near  
 Gold or silver, each well minted, tested each and ringing  
     clear.  
 Yet, we never use them! Others always pass from hand to  
     hand,  
 Sorry brass just struck last week and branded with a  
     wretched brand.  
 So with men we know for upright, blameless lives and  
     noble names,  
 Trained in music and palaestra, freemen's choirs and free-  
     men's games,  
 These we spurn for ~~men~~ of brass, for red-haired things of  
     unknown breed,  
 Rascal cubs of mongrel fathers—they we use at every  
     need!  
 Creatures just arrived in Athens, whom our city, years  
     ago,  
 Scarcely would have used as scapegoats to be slaughtered  
     for a show!  
 Even now,<sup>3</sup> O race demented, there is time to change your  
     ways;  
 Use once more what's worth the using. If we 'scape, the  
     more the praise

That we fought our fight with wisdom; else, if all is lost for good,  
Let the tree on which they hang us, be, at least, of decent wood!

---

[The door opens, and the two slaves, AEACUS and XANTHIAS, return.]

AEACUS

By Zeus, that's what I call a gentleman,  
That master of yours!

XANTHIAS

Gentleman? That he is!  
There's nothing in his head but wine and wenches!

AEACUS

But not to whip you when you were clean convicted,  
A slave caught masquerading as his master!

XANTHIAS (*significantly*)

I'd like to see him try it!

AEACUS

There you go!  
The old slave trick, that I'm so fond of too.

XANTHIAS

You like it, eh?

AEACUS

Like it? Why, when I get  
Behind my master's back and quietly curse him,  
I feel just like the Blessèd in the Mysteries!

XANTHIAS

What about muttering as you go outside  
After a whacking?

AEACUS

Yes; I like that too.

XANTHIAS (*with increasing excitement*)

And prying into people's secrets, eh?

AEACUS (*the same*)

By Zeus, there's nothing like it in the world!

XANTHIAS

Oh, Zeus makes brethren meet!—And what of list'ning  
To what the masters say?

AEACUS

It makes me mad!

XANTHIAS

And telling every word of it to strangers?

AEACUS

Madder than mad, stark staring crimson madder!

XANTHIAS

O Lord Apollo, clap your right hand there,  
Give me your cheek to kiss, and you kiss me!

[*They embrace; a loud noise is heard inside the house.*]

But Zeus!—our own Zeus of the Friendly Jailbirds—  
What is that noise . . . those shouts and quarrelling . . .  
Inside?



AEACUS

That? Aeschylus and Euripides!

XANTHIAS

Eh?

AEACUS

Yes; there's a big business just astir,  
And hot dissension among all the dead.

XANTHIAS

About what?

AEACUS

There's a law established here  
Concerning all the large and liberal arts,  
Which grants the foremost master in each art  
Free entertainment at the Central Hearth,  
And also a special throne in Pluto's row . . .

XANTHIAS

Oh, now I understand!

AEACUS

To hold until

There comes one greater; then he must make way.

XANTHIAS

But how has this affected Aeschylus?

AEACUS

Aeschylus held the throne of tragedy,  
As greatest . . .

XANTHIAS

Held it? Why, who holds it now?

AEACUS

Well, when Euripides came down, he gave  
 Free exhibitions to our choicest sharpers,  
 Footpads, cut-purses, burglars, father-beaters,  
 —Of whom we have numbers here; and when they heard  
 The neat retorts, the fencing, and the twists,  
 They all went mad and thought him something splendid.  
 And he, growing proud, laid hands upon the throne  
 Where Aeschylus sat.

XANTHIAS

And wasn't pelted off?

AEACUS

Not he. The whole folk clamoured for a trial  
 To see which most was master of his craft.

XANTHIAS

The sharper-folk?

AEACUS

Exactly;—loud as trumpets.

XANTHIAS

And were there none to fight for Aeschylus?

AEACUS

Goodness is scarce, you know. (*Indicating the audience*) The  
 same as here!

XANTHIAS

And what does Pluto mean to do about it?

AEACUS

Why, hold a trial and contest on the spot  
 To test their skill for certain.

XANTHIAS (*reflecting*)

But, I say,  
Sophocles surely must have claimed the throne?

AEACUS

Not he; as soon as ever he came down,  
He kissed old Aeschylus, and wrung his hand,  
And Aeschylus made room on half his seat.  
And now he means to wait—or so at least,  
Clidemides informs us—in reserve.  
If Aeschylus wins the day, he'll rest content;  
If not, why then, he says, for poor Art's sake,  
He must show fight against Euripides!

XANTHIAS

It is to be, then?

AEACUS

Certainly, quite soon.  
Just where you stand we'll have the shock of war.  
They'll weigh the poetry line by line . . .

XANTHIAS

Poor thing,  
A lamb set in the meat-scale and found wanting!

AEACUS

They'll bring straight-edges out, and cubit-rules,  
And folded cube-frames . . .

XANTHIAS

Is it bricks they're making?

AEACUS

And mitre-squares and wedges! Line by line  
Euripides will test all tragedies!

XANTHIAS

That must make Aeschylus angry, I should think?

AEACUS

Well, he did stoop and glower like a mad bull.

XANTHIAS

Who'll be the judge?

AEACUS

That was a difficulty.

Both found an utter dearth of proper critics;  
For Aeschylus objected to the Athenians. . . .

XANTHIAS

Perhaps he thought the sharpers rather many?

AEACUS

And all the world beside he thought mere dirt  
At seeing what kind of thing a poet was.  
So, in the end, they fixed upon your master  
As having much experience in the business.  
But come in; when the master's face looks grave  
There's mostly trouble coming for the slave.

[*They go into the house.*]

CHORUS

(*the song is a parody of the metre and style of AESCHYLUS*).  
Eftsoons shall dire anger interne be the Thunderer's portion  
When his, foe's glib tusk fresh whetted for blood he  
descries;  
Then fell shall his heart be, and mad; and a pallid distortion  
Descend as a cloud on his eyes.

Yea, words with plume wild on the wind and with helmet  
that dances,

With axle a-splinter and marble a-shiver, etsoons  
Shall bleed in the fray when our great Thought-builder  
advances

His compounds in mounted platoons.

The deep crest of his name shall uprising as he slowly un-  
limbers

The long-drawn wrath of his brow, and lets loose with a  
roar

Epithets welded and screwed, like new torrent-swept  
timbers

Blown loose by a giant at war.

Then rises the man of the Mouth; then battleward flashes

A tester of verses, a smooth and serpentine tongue,

To dissect each phrase into mincemeat, and argue to ashes

That high-towered labour of lung!

*The door opens again. Enter EURIPIDES, DIONYSUS,  
and AESCHYLUS*

EURIPIDES

Pray, no advice to me! I won't give way.

I claim that I'm more master of my art.

DIONYSUS

You hear him, Aeschylus. Why don't you speak?

EURIPIDES

He wants to open with an awful silence—

The blood-curdling reserve of his first scenes.

DIONYSUS

My dear sir, I must beg! Control your language.

EURIPIDES

I know him; I've seen through him years ago;  
Bard of the "noble savage," wooden-mouthed,  
No door, no bolt, no bridle to his tongue,  
A torrent of pure bombast—tied in bundles!

AESCHYLUS (*breaking out*)

How say'st thou, Son o' the goddess of the Greens?—  
You dare speak thus of me, you phrase-collector,  
Blind-beggar-bard and scum of rifled rag-bags!  
Oh, you shall rue it!

DIONYSUS

Stop! Stop, Aeschylus;  
'Strike not thine heart to fire on rancour old.'

AESCHYLUS

No; I'll expose this crutch-and-cripple playwright,  
And what he's worth for all his insolence.

DIONYSUS (*to attendants*)

A lamb, a black lamb, quick, boys! Bring it out  
To sacrifice; a hurricane's let loose!

AESCHYLUS (*to EURIPIDES*)

You and your Cretan dancing-solos! You  
And the ugly amours that you set to verse!

DIONYSUS (*interposing*)

One moment, please, most noble Aeschylus!  
And you, poor wretch, if you have any prudence,

Get out of the hailstones quick, or else, by Zeus,  
 Some word as big as your head will catch you crash  
 Behind the ear, and knock out all the . . . Telephus!  
 Nay, Aeschylus, pray, pray control your anger;  
 Examine and submit to be examined  
 With a cool head. Two poets should not meet  
 In fishwife style; but here are you, straight off,  
 Ablaze and roaring like an oak on fire.

EURIPIDES

For my part I'm quite ready, with no shrinking,  
 To bite first or be bitten, as he pleases.  
 Here are my dialogue, music, and construction;  
 Here's Peleus at your service, Meleâger,  
 And Aeolus, and . . . yes, Telephus, by all means!

DIONYSUS

Do you consent to the trial, Aeschylus? Speak.

AESCHYLUS

I well might take objection to the place;  
 It's no fair field for him and me.

DIONYSUS

Why not?

AESCHYLUS

Because my writings haven't died with me,  
 As his have; so he'll have them all to hand. . . .  
 However, I waive the point, if you think fit.

DIONYSUS

Go, some one, bring me frankincense and fire  
 That I may pray for guidance, to decide  
 This contest in the Muses' strictest ways;  
 To whom, meantime, uplift your hymn of praise!

## CHORUS

*(while preparations are made for the sacrifice)*

All hail, ye nine heaven-born virginal Muses,  
 Whiche'er of ye watch o'er the manners and uses  
 Of the Founts of Quotation, when, meeting in fray—  
 All hearts drawn tense for who wins and who loses—  
 With wrestling lithe each the other confuses,  
 Look on the pair that do battle to-day!  
 These be the men to take poems apart  
 By chopping, riving, sawing;  
 Here is the ultimate trial of Art  
 To due completion drawing!

## DIONYSUS

Won't you two pray before you show your lines?

AESCHYLUS *(going up to the altar)*

Demeter, thou who feedest all my thought,  
 Grant me but worthiness to worship thee!

DIONYSUS *(to EURIPIDES)*

Won't you put  $\square$  some frankincense?

EURIPIDES *(staying where he is)*

Oh, thank you;

The gods I pray to are of other metal!

DIONYSUS

Your own stamp, eh? New struck?

EURIPIDES

Exactly so.

DIONYSUS

Well, pray away then to your own peculiar.



## EURIPIDES

Ether, whereon I batten! Vocal chords!  
Reason, and nostrils swift to scent and sneer,  
Grant that I duly probe each word I hear.

## CHORUS

All of us to hear are yearning  
Further from these twins of learning,  
What dread road they walk, what burning  
    Heights they climb of speech and song.  
Tongues alert for battle savage,  
Tempers keen for war and ravage,  
    Angered hearts to both belong.  
*He* will fight with passes witty  
Smooth and smacking of the city,  
    Gleaming blades unflecked with rust:  
*He* will seize—to end the matter—  
Tree-trunks torn and clubbed, to batter  
Brains to bits, and plunge and scatter  
    Whole arena-fulls of dust!

[DIONYSUS *is now seated on a throne as judge. The poets stand on either side before him.*

## DIONYSUS

Now, quick to work. Be sure you both do justice to your  
    cases,  
Clear sense, no loose analogies, and no long common-  
    places.

## EURIPIDES

A little later I will treat my own artistic mettle,  
This persons' claims I should prefer immediately to settle.

I'll show you how he posed and prosed; with what  
audacious fooling

He tricked an audience fresh and green from Phrynichus's  
schooling.

Those sole veiled figures on the stage were first among his  
graces,

Achilles, say, or Niobe, who never showed their faces,

But stood like so much scene-painting, and never a grunt  
they uttered!

DIONYSUS

Why, no, by Zeus, no more they did!

EURIPIDES

And on the Chorus spluttered  
Through long song-systems, four on end, the actors mute as  
fishes!

DIONYSUS

I somehow loved that silence, though; and felt it met my  
wishes

As no one's talk does nowadays!

EURIPIDES

You hadn't yet seen through it!

That's all.

DIONYSUS

I really think you're right! But still, what made  
him do it?

EURIPIDES

The instinct of a charlatan, to keep the audience guessing.  
If Niobe ever meant to speak—the play meantime pro-  
gressing!

DIONYSUS

Of course it was! The sly old dog, to think of how he  
tricked us!—  
Don't (*to* AESCHYLUS) ramp and fume!

EURIPIDES (*excusing* AESCHYLUS)

We're apt to do so when the facts convict us!  
—Then after this tomfoolery, the heroine, feeling calmer,  
Would utter some twelve wild-bull words, on mid-way  
in the drama,  
Long ones, with crests and beetling brows, and gorgons  
round the border,  
That no man ever heard on earth.

AESCHYLUS

The red plague . . . !

DIONYSUS

Order, order!

EURIPIDES

Intelligible—not one line!

DIONYSUS (*to* AESCHYLUS)

Please! Won't your teeth stop gnashing?

EURIPIDES

All fosses and Scamander-beds, and bloody targes flashing,  
With gryphon-eagles bronze-embossed, and crags, and  
riders reeling,  
Which somehow never quite joined on.

DIONYSUS

By Zeus, sir, quite my feeling!

A question comes in Night's long hours, that haunts me  
like a spectre,  
What kind of fish or fowl you'd call a "whirring hippalector."

AESCHYLUS (*breaking in*)

It was a ship's sign, idiot, such as every joiner fixes!

DIONYSUS

Indeed! I thought perhaps it meant that music-man  
Eryxis!

[EURIPIDES

You like then, in a tragic play, a cock? You think it  
mixes?]

AESCHYLUS (*to EURIPIDES*)

And what did you yourself produce, O fool with pride  
deluded?

EURIPIDES

Not "hippalectors," thank the Lord, nor "tragelaphs,"  
as you did—

The sort of ornament they use to fill a Persian curtain!

—I had the Drama straight from you, all bloated and  
uncertain,

Weighed down with rich and heavy words, puffed out  
past comprehension.

I took the case in hand; applied treatment for such dis-  
tension—

Beetroot, light phrases, little walks, hot book-juice, and  
cold reasoning;

Then fed her up on solos. . . .

DIONYSUS (*aside*)

With Cephisophon for seasoning!

EURIPIDES

I didn't rave at random, or plunge in and make confusions.

My first appearing character explained, with due allusions,

The whole play's pedigree.

DIONYSUS (*aside*)

Your own you left in wise obscurity!

EURIPIDES

Then no ~~one~~ from the start with me could idle with security.

They had to work. The men, the slaves, the women, all made speeches,

The kings, the little girls, the hags . . .

AESCHYLUS

Just see the things he teaches!

And shouldn't you be hanged for that?

EURIPIDES

No, by the lord Apollo!

It's democratic!

DIONYSUS (*to EURIPIDES*)

That's no road for you, my friend, to follow; You'll find the 'little walk' too steep; I recommend you quit it.

EURIPIDES

Next, I taught all the town to talk with freedom.

AESCHYLUS

I admit it.

'Twere better, ere you taught them, you had died amid  
their curses!

EURIPIDES

I gave them canons to apply and squares for marking  
verses;

Taught them to see, think, understand, to scheme for  
what they wanted,

To fall in love, think evil, question all things. . . .

AESCHYLUS

Granted, granted!

EURIPIDES

I put things on the stage that came from daily life and  
business.

Where men could catch ■■ if I tripped; could listen  
without dizziness

To things they knew, and judge my art. I never crashed  
and lightened

And bullied people's senses out; nor tried to keep them  
frightened

With Magic Swans and Aethiop knights, loud barb and  
clanging vizor!

Then look at my disciples, too, and mark what creatures  
his are!

Phormisius is his product and the looby lump  
Megainetus,

All trumpet, lance, moustache, and glare, who twist their  
clubs of pine at us;

While Cleitophon is mine, sirs, and Theramenes the  
Matchless!

DIONYSUS

Theramenes! Ah, that's the man! All danger leaves  
him scratchless.

His friends may come to grief, and he be found in awkward  
fixes,

But always tumbles right end up, not aces—no: all sixes!

## EURIPIDES

This was the kind of lore I brought  
To school my town in ways of thought;  
I mingled reasoning with my art  
And shrewdness, till I fired their heart  
To brood, to think through things and through;  
And rule their houses better, too.

## DIONYSUS

Yes, by the powers, that's very true!  
No burgher now, who comes indoors,  
But straight looks round the house and roars:  
"Where is the saucepan gone? And who  
Has bitten that sprat's head away?  
And, out, alas! The earthen pot  
I bought last year, is not, is not!  
Where are the leeks of yesterday?  
And who has gnawed this olive, pray?"  
Whereas, before they took his school,  
Each sat at home, a simple, cool,  
Religious, unsuspecting fool,  
And happy in his sheep-like way!

## CHORUS

Great Achilles, gaze around thee!  
'Twill astound thee and confound thee.  
Answer now: but keep in bound the

Words that off the course would tear,  
 Bit in teeth, in turmoil flocking.  
 Yes: it's monstrous—shameful—shocking—  
 Brave old warrior. But beware!

Don't retort with haste or passion;  
 Meet the squalls in sailor fashion,  
 Mainsail reefed and mast nigh bare;  
 Then, when safe beyond disaster  
 You may press him fiercer, faster,  
 Close and show yourself his master,  
 Once the wind is smooth and fair!

---

DIONYSUS

O thou who first of the Greeks did build great words to  
 heaven-high towers,  
 And the essence of tragedy-padding distilled, give vent to  
 thy pent-up showers.

AESCHYLUS

I freely admit that I take it amiss, and I think my anger  
 is just,  
 At having to answer a man like this. Still, lest I should  
 seem nonplussed,  
 Pray, tell me on what particular ground a poet should  
 claim admiration?

EURIPIDES

If his art is true, and his council sound; and if he brings  
 help to the nation,  
 By making men better in some respect.



AESCHYLUS

And suppose you have done the reverse,  
 And have had upon good strong men the effect of making  
 them weaker and worse,  
 What, do you say, should your recompense be?

DIONYSUS

The gallows! You needn't ask him.

AESCHYLUS

Well, think what they were when he had them from  
 me! Good six-footers, solid of limb,  
 Well-born, well-bred, not ready to fly from obeying their  
 country's call,  
 Nor in latter-day fashion to loiter and lie, and keep their  
 consciences small;  
 Their life was in shafts of ash and of elm, in bright plumes  
 fluttering wide,  
 In lance and greaves and corslet and helm, and hearts of  
 seven-fold hide!

EURIPIDES (*aside*)

Oh, now he's begun and will probably run a whole  
 armourer's shop on my head!  
 (To AESCHYLUS) Stop! How was it due in especial to  
 you, if they were so very—well-bred?

DIONYSUS

Come, answer him, Aeschylus! Don't be so hot, or  
 smoulder in silent disdain.

AESCHYLUS (*crushingly*)

By a tragedy 'brimming with Ares!'

DIONYSUS

A what?

AESCHYLUS

The 'Seven against Thebes.'

DIONYSUS

Pray explain.

AESCHYLUS

There wasn't a man could see that play but he hungered for havoc and gore.

DIONYSUS

I'm afraid that tells in the opposite way. For the Thebans profited more,

It urged them to fight without flinching or fear, and they did so; and long may you rue it!

AESCHYLUS

The same thing was open to all of you here, but it didn't amuse you to do it!

Then next I taught you for glory to long, and against all odds stand fast;

That was "The Persians," which bodied in song the noblest deed of the past.

DIONYSUS

Yes, yes! When Darius arose from the grave it gave me genuine joy,

And the Chorus stood with its arms a-wave, and observed,  
"Yow—oy, Yow—oy!"

AESCHYLUS

Yes, that's the effect for a play to produce! For observe, from the world's first start

Those poets have all been of practical use who have been  
supreme in their art.

First, Orpheus withheld us from bloodshed impure, and  
vouchsafed us the great revelation;

Musaeus was next, with wisdom to cure diseases and  
teach divination.

Then Hesiod showed us the season to plough, to sow, and  
to reap. And the laurels

That shine upon Homer's celestial brow are equally due  
to his morals!

He taught men to stand, to march, and to arm. . . .

#### DIONYSUS

So that was old Homer's profession?

Then I wish he could keep his successors from harm, like  
Pantacles in the procession,

Who first got his helmet well strapped on his head, and  
then tried to put in the plume!

#### AESCHYLUS

There be many brave men that he fashioned and bred, like  
Lamachus, now in his tomb.

And in his great spirit my plays had a part, with their  
heroes many and brave—

Teucers, Patrocluses, lions at heart; who made my citizens  
crave

To dash like them at the face of the foe, and leap at the  
call of a trumpet!—

But no Stheneboia I've given you, no; no Phaedra, no  
heroine-strumpet!

If I've once put a woman in love in one act of one play,  
may my teaching be scouted!

EURIPIDES

No, you hadn't exactly the style to attract Aphrodite!

AESCHYLUS

I'm better without it.

A deal too much of that style she found in some of your friends and you,

And once, at the least, left you flat on the ground!

DIONYSUS

By Zeus, that's perfectly true.

If he dealt his neighbours such rattling blows, we must think how he suffered in person.

EURIPIDES

And what are the public defects you suppose my poor Stheneboia to worsen?

AESCHYLUS (*evading the question with a jest*)

She makes good women, and good men's wives, when their hearts are weary and want ease,

Drink jorums of hemlock and finish their lives, to gratify Bellerophontes!

EURIPIDES

But did I invent the story I told of—Phaedra, say? Wasn't it history?

AESCHYLUS

It was true, right enough; but the poet should hold such a truth enveloped in mystery,

And not represent it or make it a play. It's his duty to teach, and you know it.

As a child learns from all who may come in his way, so the grown world learns from the poet.

Oh, words of good counsel should flow from his voice—

EURIPIDES

And words like Mount Lycabettus  
Or Parnes, such as you give us for choice, must needs be  
good counsel?—Oh, let us,  
Oh, let us at least use the language of men!

AESCHYLUS

Flat cavil, sir! cavil absurd!  
When the subject is great and the sentiment, then, of  
necessity, great grows the word;  
When heroes give range to their hearts, is-it strange if the  
speech of them over us towers?  
Nay, the garb of them too must be gorgeous to view, and  
majestical, nothing like ours.  
All this I saw, and established as law, till you came and  
spoil it.

EURIPIDES

How so?

AESCHYLUS

You wrapped them in rags from old beggarmen's bags,  
to express their heroical woe,  
And reduce the spectator to tears of compassion!

EURIPIDES

Well, what was the harm if I did?

AESCHYLUS (*evading the question as before*)

Bah, your modern rich man has adopted the fashion, for  
remission of taxes to bid;  
"He couldn't provide a trireme if he tried"; he implores  
us his state to behold.

## DIONYSUS

Though rags outside may very well hide good woollens  
 beneath, if it's cold!  
 And when once he's exempted, he gaily departs and pops  
 up at the Fishmongers stalls.

AESCHYLUS (*continuing*)

Then, next, you have trained in the speechmaking arts  
 nigh every infant that crawls.  
 Oh, this is the thing that such havoc has wrought in the  
 wrestling-school, narrowed the hips  
 Of the poor pale chattering children, and taught the crews  
 of the pick of the ships  
 To answer back pat to their officer's nose! How unlike my  
 old sailor of yore,  
 With no thought in his head but to guzzle his brose and  
 sing as he bent at the oar!

## DIONYSUS

And drop dirt on the heads of the rowers below, and garott  
 stray lubbers on shore!  
 But our new man just sails where it happens to blow, and  
 argues, and rows no more!

## AESCHYLUS

What hasn't he done that is under the sun,  
 And the love-dealing dames that with him have begun?  
     One's her own brother's wife;  
     One says Life is not Life;  
 And one goes into shrines to give birth to a son!

Our city through him is filled to the brim  
 With monkeys who chatter to every one's whim;  
     Little scriveners' clerks  
     With their winks and their larks,  
 But for wrestle or race not a muscle in trim!

## DIONYSUS

Not a doubt of it! Why, I laughed fit to cry  
 At the Panathenaea, a man to espy,  
     Pale, flabby, and fat,  
     And bent double at that,  
 Puffing feebly behind, with a tear in his eye;  
 Till there in their place, with cord and with brace,  
 Were the Potters assembled to quicken his pace;  
     And down they came, whack!  
     On sides, belly, and back,  
 Till he blew out his torch and just fled from the race!

---

 CHORUS

Never were such warriors, never  
     Prize so rich and feud so keen:  
 Dangerous, too, such knots to sever:  
*He* drives on with stern endeavour,  
*He* falls back, but rallies ever,  
     Marks his spot and stabs it clean!  
 Change your step, though! Do not tarry;  
 Other ways there be to harry  
     Old antagonists in art.  
 Show whatever sparks you carry,  
 Question, answer, thrust and parry—  
 Be they new or ancient, marry,  
     Let them fly, well-winged and smart!

If you fear, from former cases,  
 That the audience p'raps may fail  
 To appreciate your paces  
 Your allusions and your graces,  
 Look ■ moment in their faces!  
 They will tell another tale.

Off from long campaigns returning  
 Thro' the devious roads of learning  
 These have wandered, books in hand:  
 Nature gave them keen discerning  
 Eyes; and you have set them burning!  
 Sharpest thought or deepest yearning—  
 Speak, and these will understand.

---

## EURIPIDES

Quite so; I'll turn then to his Prologues straight,  
 And make in that first part of tragedy  
 My first review in detail of this Genius!  
 [His exposition always was obscure.]

## DIONYSUS

Which one will you examine?

## EURIPIDES

Which? Oh, lots!  
 First quote me that from the Oresteia, please.

## DIONYSUS

Ho, silence in the court! Speak, Aeschylus.



AESCHYLUS (*quoting the first lines of the Choephoroe*)

"Guide of the Dead, warding a father's way,  
Be thou my light and saviour, where I pray,  
In this my fatherland, returned, restored."

DIONYSUS (*to EURIPIDES*)

You find some false lines there?

EURIPIDES

About a dozen!

DIONYSUS

Why, altogether there are only three!

EURIPIDES

But every one has twenty faults in drawing!

[AESCHYLUS *begins to interrupt.*

DIONYSUS

No, stop, stop, Aeschylus; or perhaps you'll find  
Your debts run up to more than three iambs.

AESCHYLUS (*raging*)

Stop to let *him* speak?

DIONYSUS

Well, that's my advice.

EURIPIDES

He's gone straight off some thousand miles astray.

AESCHYLUS

Of course it's foolery—but what do *I* care?  
Point out the faults.

EURIPIDES

Repeat the lines again.

AESCHYLUS

"Guide of the Dead, warding a father's way, . . ."

EURIPIDES

Orestes speaks those words, I take it, standing  
On his dead father's tomb?

AESCHYLUS

I don't deny it.

EURIPIDES

Then what's the father's way that Hermes wards?  
Is it the way Orestes' father went,  
"To darkness by a woman's dark intent?"

AESCHYLUS

No, no! He calls on Eriounian Hermes,  
Guide of the Dead, and adds a word to say  
That office is derived from Hermes' father.

EURIPIDES

That's worse than I supposed! For if your Hermes  
Derives his care of dead men from his father, . . .

DIONYSUS (*interrupting*)

Why, resurrectioning's the family trade!

AESCHYLUS

Dionysus, dull of fragrance is thy wine!

DIONYSUS

Well, say the next; and (*to EURIPIDES*) you look out  
for slips.

AESCHYLUS

"Be thou my light and saviour where I pray  
In this my fatherland returned, restored."

EURIPIDES

Our noble Aeschylus repeats himself.

DIONYSUS

How so?

EURIPIDES

Observe his phrasing, and you'll see.  
First to this land "returned" and then "restored";  
'Returned' is just the same thing as 'restored.'

DIONYSUS

Why, yes! It's just as if you asked your neighbour,  
'Lend me a pail, or, if not that, a bucket.'

AESCHYLUS

Oh, too much talking has bemuzzed your brain!  
The words are not the same; the line is perfect.

DIONYSUS

Now, is it really? Tell me how you mean.

AESCHYLUS

Returning home is the act of any person  
Who has a home; he comes back, nothing more;  
An exile both returns and is restored!

DIONYSUS

True, by Apollo! (*To EURIPIDES*) What do you say to  
that?

EURIPIDES

I don't admit Orestes was restored.  
He came in secret with no legal permit.

DIONYSUS

By Hermes, yes! (*aside*) I wonder what they mean!

EURIPIDES

Go on then to the next. [AESCHYLUS *is silent.*

DIONYSUS

Come, Aeschylus,  
Do as he says: (*to EURIPIDES*) and you look out for faults.

AESCHYLUS

"Yea, on this bank of death, I call my lord  
To hear and list. . . ."

EURIPIDES

Another repetition!  
"To hear and list"—the same thing palpably!

DIONYSUS

The man was talking to the dead, you dog,  
Who are always called three times—and then don't hear.

AESCHYLUS

Come, how did *you* write prologues?

EURIPIDES

Oh, I'll show you.

And if you find there any repetitions  
Or any irrelevant padding,—spit upon me!

DIONYSUS

Oh, do begin. I mustn't miss those prologues  
In all their exquisite exactitude!

EURIPIDES

"At first was Oedipus in happy state."

AESCHYLUS

He wasn't! He was born and bred in misery.  
Did not Apollo doom him still unborn  
To slay his father? . . .

DIONYSUS (*aside*)

His poor unborn father?

AESCHYLUS

"A happy state at first," you call it, do you?

EURIPIDES (*contemptuously resuming*)

"At first was Oedipus in happy state,  
Then changed he, and became most desolate."

AESCHYLUS

He didn't. He was never anything else!  
Why, he was scarcely born when they exposed him  
In winter, in a pot, that he might never  
Grow up and be his father's murderer.  
Then off he crawled to Polybus with sore feet,  
Then married an old woman, twice his age,  
Who further chanced to be his mother, then  
Tore out his eyes: the lucky dog he was!

DIONYSUS

At least he fought no sea-fight with a colleague  
Called Erasinides!

EURIPIDES

That's no criticism.

I write my prologues singularly well!

AESCHYLUS

By Zeus, I won't go pecking word by word  
At every phrase; I'll take one little oil-pot,  
God helping me, and send your prologues pop!

EURIPIDES

My prologues pop . . . with oil-pots?

AESCHYLUS

Just one pot!

You write them so that nothing comes amiss,  
The bed-quilt, or the oil-pot, or the clothes-bag,  
All suit your tragic verse! Wait and I'll prove it.

EURIPIDES

You'll prove it? Really?

AESCHYLUS

Yes.

DIONYSUS

Begin to quote.

EURIPIDES

"Aegyptus, so the tale is spread afar,  
With fifty youths fled in a sea-borne car,  
But, reaching Argos . . ."

AESCHYLUS

Found his oil-pot gone!

DIONYSUS

What's that about the oil-pot! Drat the thing!  
Quote him another prologue, and let's see.

EURIPIDES

"Dionysus, who with wand and fawn-skin dight  
On great Parnassus races in the light  
Of lamps far-flashing, . . ."

AESCHYLUS

Found his oil-pot gone!

DIONYSUS

Alas! again I am smitten by the pot.

EURIPIDES (*beginning to reflect anxiously*)

Oh, it won't come to much, though! Here's another,  
With not a crack to stick the oil-pot in!  
"No man hath bliss in full and flawless health;  
Lo, this man had high race, but little wealth;  
That, base in lineage . . ."

AESCHYLUS

Found his oil-pot gone!

DIONYSUS

Euripides!

EURIPIDES

Well?

DIONYSUS

Better furl your sails;  
This oil-pot seems inclined to raise the wind!

EURIPIDES

Bah, I disdain to give a thought to it!  
I'll dash it from his hands in half a minute.

[*He racks his memory.*]

DIONYSUS

Well, quote another;—and beware of pots.

EURIPIDES

“Great Cadmus long ago, Agenor’s son,  
From Sidon racing, . . .”

AESCHYLUS

Found his oil-pot gone!

DIONYSUS

Oh, this is awful! Buy the thing outright,  
Before it messes every blessed prologue!

EURIPIDES

I buy him off?

DIONYSUS

I strongly recommend it.

EURIPIDES

No; I have many prologues yet to cite  
Where he can't find a chink to pour his oil.  
“As rapid wheels to Pisa bore him on,  
Tantalian Pelops . . .”

AESCHYLUS

Found his oil-pot gone!



DIONYSUS

What did I tell you? There it sticks again!  
You might let Pelops have a new one, though—  
You get quite good ones very cheap just now.

EURIPIDES

By Zeus, not yet! I still have plenty left.  
"From earth King Oineus, . . ."

AESCHYLUS

Found his oil-pot gone!

EURIPIDES

You *must* first let me quote one line entire!  
"From earth King Oineus goodly harvest won,  
But, while he worshipped, . . ."

AESCHYLUS

Found his oil-pot gone!

DIONYSUS

During the prayers! Who can have been the thief!

EURIPIDES (*desperately*)

Oh, let him be! I defy him answer this—  
"Great Zeus in heaven, the word of truth has flown, . . ."

DIONYSUS

O mercy! *His* is certain to be gone!  
They're greasy with great oil-pots, barber-wise,  
Your prologues; they're as bunged up as your eyes!  
For God's sake change the subject.—Take his songs!

## EURIPIDES

Songs? Yes, I have materials to show  
How bad his are, and always all alike.

## CHORUS

What in the world shall we look for next?  
Aeschylus' music! I feel perplexed  
How he can want it mended.  
I have always held that never a man  
Had written or sung since the world began  
Melodies half so splendid!  
(Can he really find a mistake  
In the master of inspiration?  
I feel some consternation  
For our Bacchic prince's sake!)

## EURIPIDES

Wonderful songs they are! You'll see directly;  
I'll run them all together into one.

## DIONYSUS

I'll take some pebbles, then, and count for you.

EURIPIDES (*singing*)

"O Phthian Achilles, canst hark to the battle's man-  
slaying shock,  
Yea, shock, and not to succour come?  
Lo, we of the Mere give worship to Hermes, the fount  
of our stock,  
Yea, shock, and not to succour come!"

## DIONYSUS

Two shocks to you, Aeschylus, there!

EURIPIDES

"Thou choice of Achaia, wide-ruling Atrides, give heed  
to my schooling!

Yea, shock, and not to succour come."

DIONYSUS

A third shock that, I declare!

EURIPIDES

"Ah, peace, and give ear! For the Bee-Maids be ~~near~~ to  
ope wide Artemis' portals,

Yea, shock-a-nock a-succour come!

Behold it is mine to sing of the sign of the way fate-laden  
to mortals;

Yah, shocker-knocker succucum!"

DIONYSUS

O Zeus Almighty, what a chain of shocks!

I think I'll go away and take a bath;

The shocks are too much for my nerves and kidneys!

EURIPIDES

Not till you've heard another little set

Compounded from his various cithara-songs.

DIONYSUS

Well then, proceed; but don't put any shocks in!

EURIPIDES

"How the might twin-throned of Achaia for Hellene  
chivalry bringeth

Flattothrat toflattothrat!

The prince of the powers of storm, the Sphinx thereover  
he wingeth

Flattothrat toflattothrat!

With deedful hand and lance the furious fowl of the air  
 Flattothrat toflattothrat  
 That the wild wind-walking hounds unhindered tear  
 Flattothrat toflattothrat!  
 And War toward Aias leaned his weight,  
 Flattothrat toflattothrait!"

## DIONYSUS

What's Flattothrat? Was it from Marathon  
 You gathered this wool-gatherer's stuff, or where?

## AESCHYLUS

Clean was the place I found them, clean the place  
 I brought them, loath to glean with Phrynichus  
 The same enchanted meadow of the Muse.  
 But any place will do for *him* to poach,  
 Drink-ditties of Melêtus, Carian pipings,  
 And wakes, and dancing songs.—Here, let me show you!  
 Ho, some one bring my lyre! But no; what need  
 Of lyres for this stuff? Where's the wench that plays  
 The bones?—Approach, Euripidean Muse,  
 These songs are meet for your accompaniment!

## DIONYSUS

This Muse was once . . . no Lesbian; not at all!

AESCHYLUS (*singing*)

"Ye halcyons by the dancing sea  
 Who babble everlastingly,  
 While on your bathing pinions fall  
 The dewy foam-sprays, fresh and free;  
 And, oh, ye spiders deft to crawl  
 In many a chink of roof and wall,

While left and right, before, behind,  
 Your fingers wi-i-i-ind  
 The treasures of the labouring loom,  
 Fruit of the shuttle's minstrel mind,  
 Where many a songful dolphin trips  
 To lead the dark-blue-beakèd ships,  
 And tosses with aërial touch  
 Temples and race-courses and such.  
 O bright grape tendril's essence pure,  
 Wine to sweep care from human lips;  
 Grant me, O child, one arm-pressùre!"

[*Breaking off.*]

That foot, you see?

DIONYSUS

I do.

AESCHYLUS

And he?

EURIPIDES

Of course I see the foot!

AESCHYLUS

And this is the stuff to trial you bring  
 And face my songs with the kind of thing  
 That a man might sing When he dances a fling  
 To mad Cyrênê's flute!

There, that's your choral stuff! But I've not finished,  
 I want to show the spirit of his solos!

[Sings again; mysteriously

“What vision of dreaming,  
 Thou fire-hearted Night,  
 Death's minion dark-gleaming,  
 Hast thou sent in thy might?

And his soul was no soul, and the Murk was his mother,  
 a horror to sight!

Black dead was his robe, and his eyes  
 All blood, and the claws of him great;  
 Ye maidens, strike fire and arise;  
 Take pails to the well by the gate,

Yea, bring me a cruse of hot water, to wash off this vision  
 of fate.

Thou Sprite of the Sea,  
 It is e'en as I feared!  
 Fellow-lodgers of me,  
 What dread thing hath appeared?

Lo, Glykê hath stolen my cock, and away from the  
 neighbourhood cleared!

[Wildly.

(Ye Nymphs of the Mountain give aid!  
 And what's come to the scullery-maid?)

[Tearfully.

And I—ah, would I were dead!—  
 To my work had given my mind;  
 A spindle heavy with thread  
 My hands did wi-i-i-ind,

And I meant to go early to market, a suitable buyer to  
 find!

[*Almost weeping.*

—But he rose, rose, in the air  
On quivering blades of flight;  
He left me care, care;  
And tears, tears of despair,  
Fell, fell, and dimmed my sight!

[*Recovering himself; in florid, tragic style.*

Children of Ida's snows,  
Cretans, take up your bows,  
And ring the house with many a leaping limb!  
And thou, fair maid of bliss,  
Dictynna, Artemis,  
Range with thy bandogs through each corner dim;  
Yea, Thou of twofold Fires,  
Grant me my deep desires,  
Thou Zeus-born Hecatê; in all men's eyes  
Let the detective sheen  
Flashed from thy torches keen,  
Light me to Glykê's house, and that lost fowl surprise!"

DIONYSUS

Come, stop the singing!

AESCHYLUS

I've had quite enough!  
What I want is to bring him to the balance;  
The one sure test of what our art is worth!

DIONYSUS

So that's my business next? Come forward, please;  
I'll weigh out poetry like so much cheese!

*A large pair of scales is brought forward, while the*  
 CHORUS *sing*

CHORUS

Oh, the workings of genius are keen and laborious!  
 Here's a new wonder, incredible, glorious!

Who but this twain Have the boldness of brain  
 To so quaint ■■■ invention to run?

Such a marvellous thing, if another had said it had  
 Happened to him, I should never have credited;

I should have just Thought that he must  
 Simply be talking for fun!

DIONYSUS

Come, take your places by the balance.

AESCHYLUS *and* EURIPIDES

There!

DIONYSUS

Now, each take hold of it, and speak your verse,  
 And don't let go until I say "Cuckoo."

AESCHYLUS *and* EURIPIDES

*(taking their stand at either side of the balance)*

We have it.

DIONYSUS

Now, each a verse into the scale!

EURIPIDES *(quoting the first verse of his "Medea")*

"Would God no Argo e'er had winged the brine."

AESCHYLUS *(quoting his "Philoctetes")*

"Spercheios, and ye haunts of grazing kine!



DIONYSUS

Cuckoo! Let go.—Ah, down comes Aeschylus  
Far lower.

EURIPIDES

Why, what can be the explanation?

DIONYSUS

That river he put in, to wet his wares  
The way wool-dealers do, and make them heavier!  
Besides, you know, the verse you gave had wings!

AESCHYLUS

Well, let him speak another and we'll see.

DIONYSUS

Take hold again then.

AESCHYLUS *and* EURIPIDES

There you are.

DIONYSUS

Now speak

EURIPIDES (*quoting his "Antigone"*)

"Persuasion, save in speech, no temple hath."

AESCHYLUS (*quoting his "Niobe"*)

"Lo, one god craves no offering, even Death."

DIONYSUS

Let go, let go!

EURIPIDES

Why, his goes down again!

DIONYSUS

He put in Death, ■ monstrous heavy thing!

EURIPIDES

But my Persuasion made a lovely line!

DIONYSUS

Persuasion has no bulk and not much weight.  
Do look about you for some ponderous verse  
To force the scale down, something large and strong.

EURIPIDES

Where have I such ■ thing, now? Where?

DIONYSUS

*(mischievously, quoting some unknown play of EURIPIDES)*

I'll tell you;

"Achilles has two aces and a four!"—

*(Aloud)* Come, speak your lines; this is the final bout.

EURIPIDES *(quoting his "Meleager")*

"A mace of weighted iron his right hand sped."

AESCHYLUS *(quoting his "Glaucus")*

"Chariot on chariot lay, dead piled on dead.

DIONYSUS *(as the scale turns)*

He beats you this time too!

EURIPIDES

How does he do it?

DIONYSUS

Two chariots and two corpses in the scale—  
Why, ten Egyptians couldn't lift so much!

AESCHYLUS (*breaking out*)

Come, no more line-for-lines! Let him jump in  
And sit in the scale himself, with all his books,  
His wife, his children, his Cephisophon!  
I'll back two lines of mine against the lot!

*The central door opens and PLUTO with his suite comes  
forth*

A VOICE

Room for the King!

PLUTO (*to DIONYSUS*)

Well, is the strife decided?

DIONYSUS (*to PLUTO*)

I won't decide! The men are both my friends;  
Why should I make an enemy of either?  
The one's so good, and I so love the other!

PLUTO

In that case you must give up all you came for!

DIONYSUS

And if I do decide?

PLUTO

Why, not to make  
Your trouble fruitless, you may take away  
Whichever you decide on.

DIONYSUS

Hearty thanks!

Now, both, approach, and I'll explain.—I came  
Down here to fetch a poet: "Why a poet?"  
That his advice may guide the City true

And so keep up my worship! Consequently,  
I'll take whichever seems the best adviser.  
Advise me first of Alcibiades,  
Whose birth gives travail still to mother Athens.

PLUTO

What is her disposition towards him?

DIONYSUS

Well,

She loves and hates, and hungers to possess.  
I want the views of both upon that question!

EURIPIDES

Out on the burgher, who to serve his state  
Is slow, but swift to do her deadly hate,  
With much wit for himself, and none for her.

DIONYSUS

Good, by Poseidon, that!—And what say you?

[To AESCHYLUS

AESCHYLUS

No lion's whelp within thy precincts raise;  
But, if it *be* there, bend thee to its ways!

DIONYSUS

By Zeus the Saviour, still I can't decide!  
The one so fine, and the other so convincing!  
Well, I must ask you both for one more judgment;  
What steps do you advise to save our country?

EURIPIDES

I know and am prepared to say!

DIONYSUS

Say on.

EURIPIDES

Where Mistrust now has sway, put Trust to dwell,  
And where Trust is, Mistrust; and all is well.

DIONYSUS

I don't quite follow. Please say that again,  
Not quite so cleverly and rather plainer.

EURIPIDES

If we count all the men whom now we trust,  
Suspect; and call on those whom now we spurn  
To serve us, we may find deliverance yet."

DIONYSUS

And what say you?

AESCHYLUS

First tell ~~me~~ about the City;  
What servants does she choose? The good?

DIONYSUS

She loathes them!

Great Heavens,

AESCHYLUS

And takes pleasure in the vile?

DIONYSUS

Not she, but has perforce to let them serve her!

AESCHYLUS

What hope of comfort is there for a City  
That quarrels with her silk and hates her hodden?

DIONYSUS

That's just what *you* must answer, if you want  
To rise again!

AESCHYLUS

I'll answer there, not here.

DIONYSUS

No; better send up blessing from below.

AESCHYLUS

Her safety is to count her enemy's land  
Her own, yea, and her own her enemy's;  
Her ships her treasures, and her treasure dross!

DIONYSUS

Good;—though it all goes down the juror's throat!

PLUTO (*interrupting*)

Come, give your judgment!

DIONYSUS

Well, I'll judge like this;  
My choice shall fall on him my soul desires!

EURIPIDES

Remember all the gods by whom you swore  
To take me home with you, and choose your friend!

DIONYSUS

My tongue hath sworn;—but I'll choose Aeschylus!

EURIPIDES

What have you done, you traitor?

DIONYSUS

I? I've judged  
That Aeschylus gets the prize. Why shouldn't I?

EURIPIDES

Canst meet mine eyes, fresh from thy deed of  
shame?

DIONYSUS

What *is* shame, if the . . . Theatre feels no shame?

EURIPIDES

Hard heart! You mean to leave your old friend dead?

DIONYSUS

Who knoweth if to live is but to die? . . .  
If breath is broth and sleep a woolly lie?

PLUTO

Come in, then, both.

DIONYSUS

Again?

PLUTO

To feast with 

Before you sail.

DIONYSUS

With pleasure! That's the way

Duly to crown a well-contented day!

CHORUS

O blessed are they who possess  
An extra share of brains!  
'Tis a fact that more or less  
All fortunes of men express;  
As now, by showing  
An intellect glowing,

This ~~man~~ his home regains;  
 Brings benefit far and near  
 To all who may hold him dear,  
 And staunches his country's tear,—  
 All because of his brains!

Then never with Socrates  
 Make one of the row of fools  
 Who gabble away at ease,  
 Letting art and music freeze,  
 And freely neglect  
 In every respect  
 The drama's principal rules!  
 Oh, to sit in a gloomy herd  
 A-scraping of word on word,  
 All idle and all absurd,—  
 That is the fate of fools!

---

PLUTO

Then farewell, Aeschylus! Go your ways,  
 And save your town for happier days  
 By counsel wise; and a school prepare  
 For all the fools—there are plenty there!  
 And take me some parcels, I pray; this sword  
 Is for Cleophon; these pretty ropes for the Board  
 Of Providers. But ask them one halter to spare  
 For Nicomachus; one, too, is Myrmex's share.  
 And, along with this venomous  
 Draught for Archenomus,  
 Take them my confident prayer,



That they all will come here for a visit, and stay.  
 And bid them be quick; for, should they delay,  
 Or meet my request with ingratitude, say  
     I will fetch them myself, by Apollo!  
 And hurry the gang of them down with a run  
 All branded and chained—with Leucolophus' son  
     The sublime Adimantus to follow!

## AESCHYLUS

I will do as you wish.—And as for my throne,  
 I beg you let Sophocles sit there alone,  
 On guard, till perchance I return some day;  
 For he—all present may mark what I say—  
     Is my Second in art and in wit.  
 And see, above all, that this Devil-may-care  
 Child of deceit with his mountebank air  
 Shall never on that imperial chair  
     By the wildest of accidents sit!

## PLUTO

With holy torches in high display  
     Light ye the Marchers' triumphal advance;  
 Let Aeschylus' music on Aeschylus' way  
     Echo in song and in dance!

## CHORUS

Peace go with him and joy in his journeying! Guide  
     ye our poet  
 Forth to the light, ye Powers that reign in the Earth and  
     below it;  
 Send good thoughts with him, too, for the aid of a travailing  
     nation,  
 So shall we rest at the last, and forget our long  
     desolation,

War and the clashing of wrong.—And for Cleophon,  
why, if he'd rather,  
Let him fight all alone with his friends, in the far-off  
fields of his father.

*[They all go off in a procession, escorting AESCHYLUS.]*

## COMMENTARY ON 'THE FROGS

P. 3, l. 1, Xanthias.]—A common slave's name from Xanthus, the chief town of Lycia, or possibly from ξανθός, "auburn," "red-headed." Northern slaves were common.

P. 4, ll. 14, 16, Phrynichus, Ameipsias, Lykis.]—Contemporary comic poets. Phrynichus was competing with his "Muses" against Aristophanes on the present occasion, and won the second prize. Ameipsias' *Connos* won the first prize over the *Clouds*, and his *Revellers* over the *Birds*.

P. 6, l. 33, Why wasn't I on board at Arginusae?])—All slaves who fought in that battle had been set free. It and its consequences loom so large in *The Frogs* that it is desirable to give some account of them. It was a great victory. Seventy Spartan ships were destroyed and the admiral, Callicratidas, slain. But it was not properly followed up, and it was dearly bought by the loss of twenty-five triremes, with nearly the whole of their crews, amounting to about five thousand men. It was believed that with more care many of these men might have been saved, and most of the dead bodies collected for burial. The generals were summoned home for trial for this negligence. They pleaded bad weather, and also that they had given orders to the trierarchs (or captains) to see to recovering the men overboard. The trierarchs were thus forced in self-defence to throw over the generals, and it happened that they had among them the famous orator and "Moderate" politician, Thera-menes. He, naturally, led the case for his fellow-trierarchs,

and succeeded in showing that the order to see to the shipwrecked men was sent out much too late, after the storm had arisen. A coincidence intensified the general emotion. The Feast of the Apaturia, devoted to family observances and the ties of kindred, chanced to occur at the time of the trial. Whole kindreds were seen in mourning. (It was rumoured afterwards that impostors were hired by the enemies of the generals to go about in black, wailing for imaginary relatives—like Sebînus below (p. 36)—“floating unburied on the waves!”) The generals were condemned, and six of them, including Erasînides (p. 88), executed. Theramenes “came off scratchless” (p. 72), except in reputation.

P. 7, l. 48, Cleisthenes.]—Adopted the Macedonian habit of shaving: hence “looked like a woman.”

P. 7, l. 53, The *Andromeda*.]—Molon was a very tall actor who performed in it.

P. 9, l. 64, Seest then the sudden truth.]—From Euripides’ *Hypsipylê*. Acted 411–409.

P. 9, l. 72, For most be dead, &c.]—From Euripides’ *Oineus*.

P. 9, l. 73, Iophon.]—Son of Sophocles. Fifty plays are attributed to him by Suidas, among others a *Bacchae* or *Pentheus*, from which we have the fragment: “This I understand, woman though I be; that the more man seeketh to know the Gods’ mysteries, the more shall he miss knowledge.” He won the second prize in 428, when the *Hippolytus* obtained the first.

P. 10, l. 83, Agathon.]—The much-praised tragic poet, for whose first victory in B.C. 416 the “Symposium” of Plato’s dialogue professes to be held. He left Athens “to feast with peaceful Kings,” i.e. with Archelaus of Macedon, in B.C. 407, at the age of forty, immediately after Aristophanes’

attack on him in the *Gerytades*, and before his influence had established itself on Athenian tragedy. He is a butt in the *Thesmophoriazusae* also.

P. 10, l. 86, Xenocles.]—Son of Carcinus. No critic has a good word for him, though he won the first prize in 415 over Euripides' *Troades*. He is nicknamed "The Dwarf," "Datis the Mede," and "Pack-o'-tricks" (δωδεκαμήχανος). One line of his seems to be preserved, from the *Licymnius*—

"O bitter fate, O fortune edged with gold."

P. 10, l. 87, Pythangelus.]—Nothing whatever is known of this man except the shrug of Dionysus' shoulders. And that has carried his name to 2500 years of "immortality"!

P. 11, l. 89, Other pretty fellows.]—Among them would be Plato. Other celebrated men of this time who in their youth tried writing tragedies were Antiphon, Melêtus the accuser of Socrates, Critias the Oligarch, and Theognis his colleague, Dionysius the tyrant of Syracuse; later, Crates the philosopher, and perhaps the great Diogenes.

P. 11, l. 100, O holy Ether.]—"I swear by the holy Ether, home of God," from Euripides' *Melanippe the Wise*.

P. 11, l. 100, Foot of Time.]—The phrase occurs very boldly in *Bacchae*, 888 (translated "stride"), but that play was not yet published. Euripides had said, "On stepped the foot of Time," in the *Alexandros*, acted B.C. 415.

P. 11, l. 101, Souls that won't take oaths, while tongues, &c.]—See *Hippolytus*, 612 (p. 33). The frequent misrepresentations of this line are very glaring, even for Aristophanes. Cf. *Frogs*, 1471, *Thesm.* 275; also Plato, *Theaet.* 154d, and *Symp.* 199a, who, however, refers to the phrase sympathetically.

P. 11, l. 105, Ride not upon my soul.]—The source of this quotation is not known.

P. 13, l. 124, The hemlock way.]—The ordinary form of capital punishment at Athens was poisoning with hemlock. Socrates in the *Phaedo* describes the gradual *chilling* of his body after drinking it.

P. 13, l. 129, Cerameicus.]—The Potter's Quarter of Athens. The "great tower" is probably that built by Timon the Misanthrope in this quarter. It would command a view, for instance, of the torch races, which ran "from the Academy to the City through the Kerameicus" at such festivals as the Prometheia and the Panathenaea (Pausanias, I, xxx. 2, with Frazer's note).

P. 14, l. 139, For two obols.]—Two obols constituted the price of a day's work as legally recognised by the early Athenian democracy. It was the payment made for attendance at the Jury Courts, and distributed to poor citizens to enable them to attend festivals. Hence it was also the price of entry to the theatre. It was probably also the original payment for attendance at the Ecclesia, or serving in garrison, or on ship-board, in cases where payment was not made in rations. The payments were greatly altered and increased (owing to the rise in prices) during the war and the fourth century.

Charon traditionally took one obol, the copper coin which was put in the dead man's mouth. But Theseus, the fountain-head of the Athenian constitution, has introduced the Two-obol System in Hades!

P. 15, l. 151, Morsimus.]—Son of Philocles and grand-nephew of Aeschylus, was a doctor as well as a tragic poet. No one has a good word for his poetry, and no fragments—except one conjectural half-line—exist.

P. 15, l. 153, Kinesias.]—A dithyrambic poet of the new and florid school of music, from whom Aristophanes can never long keep his hands. He had frail health and thin legs; and you could not “tell right from left” in his music. The parodies of his style in the *Birds* are rather charming. Plato denounces him and his music in the *Gorgias* (501e). He was the author of a law reducing the extravagance of choric performances—which does not look like “corrupt” art. (The Kinesias of the *Lysistrata* is a purely fictional character.)

P. 16, l. 158, The Initiated.]—Persons initiated in the Eleusinian Mysteries, as in those of Orpheus and others, had their sins washed away, saw a great light not vouchsafed to other eyes, and had eternal bliss after death.

P. 16, l. 159, The donkey, holiday-making.]—Much a costermonger’s donkey with us celebrates its master’s Bank Holiday by extra labour.

P. 18, ll. 186 f., Lethe and Sparta and the rest of Hell.]—I suspect that in *Λήθης πεδίον, ὄνου ποκάς, Ταίναρον*, we have a reference to a proposal, by some member of the war party, to take the offensive against Sparta by sailing round the Laconian coast—as Tolmides had done—and landing at *Λεύκης πεδίον, ὄνου γνάθος* (Strabo, 8, 363), and *Ταίναρον*.

P. 19, l. 191, The battle of the Cold Meat Unpreserved.]—Arginusae, see above, p. 109. Ophthalmia seems to have been a common cause of disablement or malingering in Greek soldiers. See Hdt. vii. 229.

P. 26, l. 282, What is so flown with pride]—“as man’s weak heart?” So says Odysseus of himself in the opening of Euripides’ *Philoctetes*.

P. 27, l. 293, Empusa.]—A vague phantom appearing in dark places, whose chief characteristic was to be constantly changing, so that whenever you looked it seemed

different. Like other phantoms, she was sent by Hecate. Aeschines' mother was so nicknamed (Dem. xviii. 130) as being (1) changeable, always devoted to some new religion; (2) associated with uncanny mysteries.

P. 28, l. 303, Hegelochus.]—An actor who performed the hero's part in Euripides' *Orestes*, B.C. 408. He ought to have said, "I catch a tale of peace." He seems to have pronounced γαλήν' ὄρῶ, in *Orestes*, v. 279, so that it sounded like γαλήν ὄρῶ, "I see a weasel." We hear much of this slip. See Sannyrion, fr. 8, and Strattis, fr. 1 and 60.

P. 29, l. 311, Residence of God.]—See on p. 11, l. 100.

P. 30, l. 320, Diagoras.]—Diagoras of Melos, nicknamed "the atheist," who was condemned to death for his attack on the Mysteries, but happily escaped to Pellene and the Peloponnese.

P. 31, l. 338, Roasting pig.]—Pigs were sacrificed before the Mysteries. Cf. *Peace*, 374—

"Lend me three drachmas for a sucking pig!

I must be purified before I die."

P. 32, l. 353, The Mere.]—*Δίμναι*, the district between the three hills—Acropolis, Areopagus, and Pnyx—where the 'Lenaion,' or 'Wine-Press,' and the shrine and precinct of Dionysus have been recently discovered.

P. 32, ll. 354 ff.—The Hierophant's address is apparently a parody of some similar warning off of the impure at the Mysteries before the addresses to Korê (the Maiden), Demêter, and Iacchus. As to the allusions: Cratinus is the celebrated comic poet, precursor and rival of Aristophanes. He was personally a burly and vigorous "Beef-eater," and the word is additionally suitable in this context because the ceremonial eating of an ox's flesh, being sacramentally the



flesh of Dionysus, the Mystic Bull of Zeus, was an essential part of the Orphic Mysteries. There were contests with bulls at the Eleusinian also.—Lobeck, *Agl.* p. 206, note c.

P. 32, l. 363.—Thorycion is unknown except for the allusions in this play.

P. 33, l. 366, A teacher of Choirs.]—He alludes to a ribald anecdote about the poet Kinesias (p. 113).

P. 33, l. 367, Pitiful fines.]—Many laws were passed restricting the licence and the expensiveness of comedy, e.g. by Archinos, Agyrrius, and Archedemus.

P. 38, l. 464, Aeacus.]—This character and his speech seem to be parodied from the *Peirithous*, a tragedy attributed either to Euripides or to Critias (acted after 411), where the real Heracles is confronted and threatened by the real Aeacus. “Gorgons” and “lampreys” are suitable in the infernal regions; but “lampreys of Tartessus” in Spain were a well-known delicacy, and the “Gorgons” of the Attic district Tithras were apparently something human and feminine—like the Hostess who appears presently.

P. 40, l. 501, Melitæan.]—The quarter of Athens called Melitê possessed a temple of Heracles, and perhaps a rough population.

P. 40, l. 505, Split-pea porridge, &c.]—Heracles, nearly always a comic figure on the Athenian stage (perhaps because he began life as a peasant “strong man” hero), has gross and simple tastes in his food. Xanthias, I think, refuses out of caution, feeling that Persephone will detect his imposture, and then is overcome by temptation.

P. 42, l. 531, Alcmena’s son, &c.]—A tragic line, but of origin unknown.

P. 42, l. 541, Theramenes.]—This interesting man owes his bad name in *The Frogs* to his conduct with regard to the

impeachment of the generals after Arginusae (see pp. 72, 110). But he had made a similar impression, and earned his nickname of "The Buskin"—which goes equally well on either foot—in 411, when he first was a leader in the Oligarchic Revolution, and then turned against it, and even spoke in accusation of his late associates, Antiphon and Archeptolemus, when they were being condemned to death. It would have been the same story in the second Oligarchic Revolution in 404, had not the extreme Oligarchs saved themselves by murdering him. A "Moderate" at a time when faction was furiously high, he is continually found supporting various movements, until they "go too far." Aristotle (*Const. of Athens*, cap. 28) counts him with Nicias and Thucydides, son of Melesias, as one of the "three best statesmen in Athenian history," and has an interesting defence of his character. He was certainly a man of great culture, eloquence, ability, and personal influence. And his policy has a way of seeming exactly right. Yet he is unpleasantly stained with the blood of his companions, and one is not surprised to find the tone of Aristophanes towards him peculiarly soft and venomous, unlike his ordinary loud railing.

P. 45, ll. 569, 570, Cleon . . . Hyperbolus.]—It is interesting to observe the duties—even in caricature—of a *προστάτης τοῦ δήμου*, or Champion of the Demos. He fought the causes of the oppressed.

P. 46, l. 588, Archedêmus.]—See above, p. 35.

P. 47, l. 608, Ditylas, Skeblyas, Pardokas.]—The barbarous names seem to be Thracian or Scythian. Police work in Athens was done by Scythian slaves.

P. 48, l. 616, Question this poor boy.]—A man's slaves would generally know about his movements. Hence it was

■ mark of conscious innocence for an accused person to offer his slaves to be examined. They were examined under torture, or threats of torture, in order that they might fear the law as much as they feared their master, and were guaranteed protection against his anger if they told the truth. The master usually stipulated that no severe or permanently injurious torture should be used. Xanthias generously offers to let them maltreat Dionysus as much as ever they like!

P. 48, l. 621, No scourges made of leeks or young shallot.]—Why should any one imagine scourges made of such things? Because such things were used for certain ceremonial scourgings; for instance, Pan's statues were whipped with squills (Theoc. vii. 106), the scapegoats (*pharmakoi*) in Ionia with fig-twigs and squills (Hippônax, fr. 4-8), the disgraceful boor in Lucian (*Against the Boor*, 3; cf. *Fugit*, 33, and *Vera Hist.*, ii. 26) with mallow.

P. 49, l. 628, An illegal act, being immortal.]—A parody of the law. It was illegal to torture a citizen.

P. 49, l. 634, He won't feel it.]—There appears to be some inconsistency about this very funny scene. Dionysus does seem to feel it as much as Xanthias.

P. 51, l. 651, Diomêan Feast.]—Held in honour of Heracles (whom Xanthias is personating) at the deme Diomeia every four years.

P. 52, l. 661, Hippônax.]—An earlier writer of satire. The next quotation is said to be from the *Laocoon* of Sophocles.

P. 53, l. 679, Cleophon.]—The well-known bellicose and incorruptible demagogue, who opposed peace in 410 (after the victory of Cyzicus), in 406 (after the victory of Arginusae), and in 405 (after the disaster of Aegospotami).

Cleophon is said to have come drunk into the Agora and vowed that "he would cut off the head of any one who mentioned the word 'peace.'" The point of these intentionally obscure and nonsensical lines seems to be: (1) that Cleophon talked bad Attic, like a barbarian, and was in fact of Thracian birth; (2) that he went about whining—that his enemies meant to twist the law somehow so as to have him condemned to death. And so, apparently, they did. Lysias, xxx. 10–13 says that, bad as he may have been, his trial and condemnation were irregular. An equal vote counted by rights as an acquittal. See also the last two lines of this play.

P. 54, l. 688, All Athenians shall be equal, &c.]—That is, an amnesty should be granted to those implicated in the Oligarchical Revolution led by Phrynichus in 411.

P. 54, l. 694, Become Plataeans.]—When Plataea was destroyed by Sparta in 431, the refugees were granted rights of Athenian citizenship and eventually given land (421) in the territory of Skiōne in Chalcidice. The slaves who were enfranchised after Arginusae were apparently sent to join the Plataeans.

P. 56, ll. 718–720, Is the same towards men and money.]—Mr. George Macdonald has convinced me that such is the meaning of this passage. Gold coins were struck at this period (407 B.C.; Scholiast quoting Hellanicus and Philochorus), and were, to judge from those specimens now extant, of *exceptional purity*. Bronze coins also were struck (Schol. on v. 725) in the years 406–405, and apparently found unsatisfactory, as they were demonetised by the date of the Ecclesiazusae, 392 B.C. (Eccl. 816 ff.). See Köhler in *Zeitsch. für Numismatik*, xxi. pp. 11 ff. Others take the general sense to be:—

"It has often struck our notice that this city draws the  
 same  
 Line between her sons true-hearted and the men who  
 cause her shame,  
 As between our ancient silver and the stuff we now call  
 gold.  
 Those old coins knew naught of alloys; everywhere their  
 fame was told.  
 Not all Hellas held their equal, not all Barbary far and  
 near,  
 Every tetradrachm well minted, tested each and ringing  
 clear."

This would be very satisfactory if there was any reason to  
 suppose either that (1) there was an issue of *base* gold at this  
 time, or (2) the new bronze coinage was jestingly called  
 "the new gold."

P. 56, l. 730, Red-haired things.]—Northerners, especially  
 from the Athenian colonies on the coast of Thrace. Asiatic  
 aliens are comparatively seldom mentioned in Attic writers.

P. 56, l. 733, Scapegoats.]—*φαρμακοί*, like "Guy  
 Fawkeses." Traditions and traditional ceremonies survived  
 in various parts of Greece, pointing to the previous existence  
 of an ancient and barbarous rite of using human "scape-  
 goats," made to bear the sins of the people and then cast out  
 or killed. See the fragments of Hippônax, 4-8. It is stated  
 by late writers that in Athens two criminals, already con-  
 demned to death and 'full of sin,' were kept each year to be  
 used in this way at the Feast of Thargelia. The sins of the  
 city were ritually laid upon them; they were, in ceremonial  
 pretence, scourged before execution; their bodies were  
 burnt by the sea-shore and their ashes scattered. The

evidence is given in Rohde, *Psyche*, p. 366, 4. It is preposterous, to my thinking, to regard this as a "human sacrifice"—a thing uniformly referred to with horror in Greek literature.

P. 58, l. 756, Zeus of the Friendly Jailbirds.]—A deity invented to meet the occasion of their swearing friendship.

P. 61, l. 791, Clidemides informs us.]—The joke is now unintelligible. Even the Alexandrian scholars did not know who Clidemides was. He may, for instance, have been some fussy person who toadied Sophocles and liked to give news about him.

P. 61, ll. 799 ff., Straight-edges and cubit-rules, &c.]—The art of scientific criticism, as inaugurated by Gorgias, Prodicus, Thrasymachus, and afterwards developed by Isocrates and Aristotle, would seem absurd to Aristophanes; the beginnings of physics and astronomy and grammar are similarly—and less excusably—satirised in the *Clouds*.

P. 62, ll. 814–829.—The parody of Aeschylus is not so brilliant as that upon Euripides, whom Aristophanes knew to the tips of his fingers (pp. 94 *seqq.*). The "Thunderer" and "Thoughtbuilder" is Aeschylus; the "Man of the Mouth," Euripides.

P. 64, l. 837, Bard of the noble savage.]—Aeschylus drew largely from the more primitive and wild strata of Greek legend, as in the *Prometheus* and *Suppliants*. The titles and fragments of the lost plays show the same tendency even more strongly.

P. 64, v. 840, How sayst thou, Son of the Goddess of the Greens.]—A parody of a line of Euripides (possibly from the *Telephus*), where "Sea" stood in place of "Greens." Euripides' mother Cleito was of noble family (τῶν

σφόδρα εὐγενῶν) and owned land. For some unknown reason it was a well-established joke to call her a "Green-groceress." (Cf. Ach. 457, 478, "One cabbage grant me from thy mother's arms"; Knights, 18 ff.; 387, 456, 910, and the "beetroot and book juice," below, p. 70.)

P. 64, l. 842, Blind-beggar-bard; crutch-and-cripple playwright.]—Euripides seems to have used more or less realistic costumes. With him the shipwrecked Menelaus looked shipwrecked, the lame Telephus lame; Electra, complaining of the squalor of her peasant life, was dressed like a peasant-woman. It is curious how much anger this breach in the tradition seems to have created. We are told that Aeschylus dressed all his characters in gorgeous sacerdotal robes. Yet I wonder if we moderns would have felt any very great difference between his Philoctetes or Telephus (in both of which cases the lameness is essential) and that of Euripides.

P. 64, l. 844, Strike not thine heart, &c.]—A tragic line, the source not known.

P. 64, l. 847, A black lamb.]—As sacrificed to appease Typhon, the infernal storm-god.

P. 64, l. 849, Cretan dancing-solos.]—Possibly a reference to his Cretan tragedies (*The Cretans*, *The Cretan Women*); perhaps merely a style of dancing accompanied by song.

P. 65, l. 855, Knock out all the Telephus.]—(Cf. "That'll knock the Sordello out of him"), *i.e.* his brains, which consist of *Telephus* in masses. No play of Euripides is so often mocked at.

P. 66, l. 877, Founts of Quotation.]—Literally "makers of Gnômae" or quotable apophthegms.

P. 68, l. 910, Phrynichus.]—The tragic poet, predecessor of Aeschylus, not the oligarchical conspirator.

P. 68, l. 911, Sole veiled figures.]—In the extant plays the silent Prometheus and the silent Cassandra are wonderfully impressive. Achilles (in the *Phrygians*) and Niobe (in the *Niobe*) seem to have been ‘discovered’ sitting silent at the opening of the play. The Adrastus of Euripides’ *Suppliants* (v. 104 ff.) is exactly similar; the silences of Heracles (*Her.* v. 1214) and Hecuba (*Hec.* v. 485), in the plays that bear their names, are different.

P. 70, l. 931, A question comes in night’s long hours.]—From *Hippolytus*, v. 375. A hippalector (horse-cock, a kind of flying horse with a bird’s tail) was mentioned in the *Myrmidons* of Aeschylus; both adjective (translated “whirring,” but perhaps referring to colour) and noun were obscure, and the phrase is often joked upon; e.g. *Birds*, 805, of the basket-seller Dietrephes, who, from being nobody

“Rose on wicker wings to captain, colonel, cavalry  
inspector,

Till he holds the world in tow and ranks as russet  
hippalector,”

—where “scarlet” or “screaming” would suit better.

P. 70, l. 934, Eryxis.]—Unknown. The next line is considered spurious by some critics, as being inconsistent with Euripides’ general argument.

P. 70, l. 937.—A “tragelaph,” “goat-stag,” was a name for the figures of antelopes, with large saw-like horns, found on Oriental tapestry.

P. 70, l. 941, Treatment for such distension . . . fed it up on solos.]—Euripides, as an artist, first rationalised and clarified his medium, and then re-enriched it. He started with an explanatory prologue, reduced the choric element



and made the individual line lighter and clearer. Then he developed the play of incident, the lyrical 'solo singing,' and the background of philosophic meditation.

P. 70, l. 944, Cephisophon.]—A friend of Euripides (not a slave, as his name shows), known chiefly from a fragment of Aristophanes—

“Most excellent and black Cephisophon,  
You lived in general with Euripides,  
And helped him in his poetry, they say.”

A late story, impossible for chronological reasons, makes him a lover of the poet's wife.

P. 71, l. 952, That's no road, &c.]—Euripides in later life severely attacked the Democratic party. *E.g.* *Orestes*, 902–930. See introduction to *The Bacchae*.

P. 72, l. 963, Magic Swans.]—It is not known in what play Aeschylus introduced the swan-hero Cynus. Memnon, the 'Aethiopian knight,' occurred in two plays, the *Memnon* and the *Soul-weighing*.

P. 72, l. 964.—The difference between the pupils of Aeschylus and Euripides is interesting. Aeschylus turned out stout, warlike, old-fashioned Democrats; Euripides, "intellectuals" of Moderate or slightly oligarchical politics.

P. 72, l. 965, Phormisus.]—One of the Democratic stalwarts who returned with Thrasybulus. He proposed the amnesty of 403, recalling the exiles. He was afterwards ambassador to Persia. He is described ■ bearded, shaggy, and of truculent aspect, and died (according to gossip) in ■ drinking bout. A sort of Μαραθωνομάχης person, loyal and unsubtle.

P. 72, l. 965.—Megainetus is not elsewhere mentioned, and the meaning of the word μανῆς, "looby lump," is

obscure. It seems to be a slave's name, and also the name of a bad throw at dice.

P. 72, l. 967, Cleitophon.]—One of the coadjutors of Theramenes in the Oligarchical Revolution of 411 (*Ar. Rep. Ath.* 29, 3). He also gives his name to a fragmentary Platonic dialogue, where he argues that Socrates is of inestimable value in rousing the conscience of the quite unconverted man, but worse than useless to the converted man who seeks positive guidance. Cleitophon is there connected with Lysias and Thrasymachus, both moderate Democrats. His political attitude would therefore seem to be like that of Theramenes. This party may be taken to represent the general views of Euripides, Thucydides, Isocrates, and Aristotle, and indeed, apart from certain personal prejudices and a dislike to intellectualism, of Aristophanes himself. In general, as Mr. Neil says in his introduction to the *Knights*, "Attic literature is on the side of the Moderates, in favour somewhat vaguely of a restricted franchise and clearly of a Panhellenic peace" (involving a more liberal treatment of the Allies). The closer Platonic circle was in a different position. Many of its members were compromised by the bitterer Oligarchic Revolution of 404, and separated from Moderates as well as Democrats by a river of blood.

P. 72, l. 967.—For Theramenes, see above, p. 116.

P. 73, l. 970, Not aces—no; all sixes.]—*E.g.* it looked as if Theramenes was fatally compromised by the non-recovery of the bodies at Arginusae; instead of which he contrived to make himself leader of the agitation on that very subject. (The reading, however, is doubtful.)

P. 73, l. 992, Great Achilles, gaze around thee.]—"on the spear-tortured labours of the Achaeans, while

thou within thy tent . . .”—From the *Myrmidons* of Aeschylus.

P. 76, l. 1026.—The *Persae* was, as a matter of fact, performed in 472, before the *Seven against Thebes* (467); nor does the exact exclamation “Yow-oy,” ἰαυοῖ, occur in it. But various odd barbaric forms do: ὀᾶ, ἰωά, Δαρ-ἰάν οἱ.

P. 77, l. 1031, Those poets have all been of practical use, &c.]—This passage, dull and unintelligent as it seems (unless some jest in it escapes me), is not meant to be absurd. It implies an argument of this sort: “All poetry, to be good, must *do* something good”; a true statement as it stands. “Homer and the ancients do good to people.” No one would dare to deny this, and no doubt it is true; he does them good by helping them to see the greatness and interestingness of things, by filling their minds with beauty, and so on; but the ordinary man, having a narrower idea of good, imagines that Homer must do him “good” in one of the recognised edifying or dogmatic ways, and is driven to concluding that Homer does him good by his military descriptions and exhortations!

Aeschylus proceeds, “I am like Homer because I describe battles and brave deeds, and similar things that are good for people. Euripides is unlike Homer, because he describes all sorts of other things, which are not in Homer, and are therefore probably trash; at any rate ~~some~~ of them are improper!”

This is a pose of philistinism. Aeschylus to Aristophanes was like Homer, not because they were both warlike, but chiefly because they were both great, well-recognised poets of the past, whom he had loved in his childhood without criticism. He attacks Euripides for making him think and feel in some new or disturbing way, or perhaps at a time

of life when he does not expect really to think and feel afresh. Probably the contemporaries of Aeschylus attacked him in just the same way. He made people think of the horrors of victory and of vengeance; he made a most profound and un-Homeric study of the guilty Clytaemnestra. But Aristophanes, when in his present mood, resembles that modern critic who is said to have praised Shakespeare for writing "bright, healthy plays with no psychology in them."

P. 77, l. 1036, Pantacles.]—A lyric poet, one of whose victories is recorded on an extant inscribed pillar (Dittenberger, 410). The "procession" was doubtless at the Panathenaea six months before.

P. 77, l. 1039, Lamachus.]—The general who died so heroically in the Sicilian expedition. He is attacked in the *Acharnians* as representative of the war party, partly perhaps because of his name ("Love-battle" or "Host-fighter"). He is treated respectfully in *Thesm.* 841.

P. 77, l. 1043, Stheneboia, who acted to Bellerophon as Phaedra to Hippolytus, and Potiphar's wife to Joseph.

P. 77, l. 1044, A woman in love in one act of one play.]—An exaggeration. Clytaemnestra is in love with Aegisthus, as any subtle reading of the *Agamemnon* shows; but other passions are more prominent, and love in Aeschylus is on the whole treated with reserve and simplicity. There was, however, a famous speech of Aphrodite in the *Danaïdes*, explaining herself as a world-force. And Euripides would probably have avoided writing such lines as *Myrmidons*, fr. 135, 136, and from representing Semelê's pregnancy as Aeschylus seems to have done in the play called by her name (see *Nauck*), quite as much as Aeschylus would have shrunk from the delicate psychology of Euripides'

*Phaedra*. In the dramatic treatment of female character Aeschylus was really the pioneer who opened the road for Euripides. The Clytaemnestra of the *Agamemnon* probably differs from the women of earlier poets in just the same way as Phaedra differs from her, and to a far greater degree.

P. 78, l. 1046, Once . . . left you flat on the ground.]—The allusion is entirely obscure.

P. 78, l. 1051, To gratify Bellerophontes.]—That hero, in a fury, had wished that all women might poison themselves.

P. 79, l. 1058, The language of men.]—Euripides, as represented, agrees with Wordsworth. The general voice of poetry is clearly against both.

P. 80, l. 1074, And drop dirt on the heads, &c.]—One of the passages which show that Aristophanes could see the other side when he chose. Your stout, ignorant pre-sophistic farmer or sailor was a bit of a brute after all!

P. 80, l. 1080, Goes into shrines.]—Augê.

P. 80, l. 1081, Her own brother's wife.]—Canacê in the *Aeolus*.

P. 80, l. 1082, Life is not Life.]—See the *Polyîdus*. The same sentiment occurs in the *Phrixus*.

P. 82, l. 1109, If you fear from former cases, &c.]—The meaning may also be that they have a book in their hands at the time, viz. a copy of the play. So Van Leeuwen: "The verses were added in the second performance of *The Frogs*. At the first performance . . . this part of the play had been over the heads of some, perhaps many, of the audience. But now, says the Chorus, this objection is removed; copies of the play are in every citizen's hand."

P. 82, l. 1124, Oresteia.]—The prologue quoted is that of the *Choephoroe*; *Oresteia* ("The Orestes-poetry"), seems to have been another name for that play. We apply the word

to the whole trilogy—*Agamemnon*, *Choephoroe*, *Eumenides*. The growth of formal titles for books was a very slow thing. Probably Aeschylus scarcely “named” his plays much more definitely than Herodotus and Thucydides “named” their histories. Even Euripides’ plays sometimes bear in the MSS. varying names: *Bacchae* or *Pentheus*, *Hippolytus* or *Phaedra*. By the time of Plato regular names for plays must have been established, as he named his dialogues in evident analogy from plays.

P. 83, l. 1126, Warding a father’s way.]—A phrase really obscure. Commentators differ about the interpretation.

P. 84, l. 1150, Dionysus, dull of fragrance, &c.]—Apparently ■ quotation.

P. 87, l. 1182, At first was Oedipus, &c.]—Prologue to Euripides’ *Antigone*.

P. 88, l. 1196, Erasinides.]—One of the commanders at Arginusae. There was one piece of bad luck that Oedipus missed.

P. 88, l. 1200, One oil-pot.]—An ancient Athenian carried a cruse of olive oil about with him, both to anoint himself with after washing and to eat like butter with his food. Naturally he was apt to lose it, especially when travelling. In looking for a modern parallel I first thought of an umbrella; then for broadcasting during the Second World War I made it a coupon. Now I leave it as it is, unexplained.

The point of this famous bit of fooling is, I think, first, that Euripides’ tragic style is so little elevated that oil-pots and clothes-bags are quite at home in it; secondly, that there is ■ certain monotony of grammatical structure in Euripides’ prologues, so that you can constantly finish a sentence by a half-line with a verb in it.

The first point, though burlesquely exaggerated, is true and important. Euripides' style, indeed, is not prosaic. But it is very wide in its range, and uses very colloquial words by the side of very romantic or archaic ones—a dangerous and difficult process, which only a great master of language can successfully carry through. Cf. the criticism on the 'light weight' of his lines, below, pp. 97 ff.

As to the second point, it is amusing to make out the statistics. Of the extant Greek tragedies, the following can have ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσε stuck on to one of the first ten lines of the prologue: Aesch. *Prom.* 8, *Sept.* 6, *Eum.* 1 (a good one, ἡ δὲ τὸ μητρὸς ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν), and several other lines; Soph. *O. T.* 4, *El.* 5, *Trach.* 3 and 6, *Antig.* 2 and 7 (ἀλλ' οἴοθ' ὅτι Ζεὺς λ. ἀ.); Euripides, *Tro.* 10, *Hec.* 2, *Phoen.* 7, *Hclid.* 2 and 4, *Her.* 9, *Hel.* 4, *El.* 10, *I. A.* 54 (=6), and *I. T.* 2, quoted here. Thus all three tragedians have such passages in the opening of about half their extant plays, and the "monotony," if such it be, belongs rather to the style of the tragic prologue than to Euripides.

A third allusion seems to have been felt by the ancient writers on rhetoric. Δήκυθος and ληκύθιον (Synesius, p. 55), in the sense of "paint-flask" (Latin *ampulla*), were cant terms for "ornament in diction." Euripides' tragic heroes, with their plain style of speech, seem to have lost their paints. I do not think Aristophanes meant this.

P. 88, l. 1206, Aegyptus, &c.]—The first words, it is said, of the *Archelaus*, though Aristarchus, the famous Alexandrian scholar, says that the *Archelaus* as published in his time had not these words. Apparently there were two alternative prologues; cf. the *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Rhesus*.

P. 89, l. 1211, Dionysus, &c.]—Opening of the *Hypsipylé*. It went on: "amid the Delphian maids."

P. 89, l. 1217, No man hath bliss, &c.]—Opening of the *Sthenoboea*. It went on: "Rich acres holds to plough."

P. 90, l. 1225, Great Cadmus]—"his way to Thêbê won." Opening of the *Phrixus*.

P. 90, l. 1232, Tantalian Pelops]—"a royal bride had won." Opening of the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, still extant.

P. 91, l. 1238, Oineus from earth.]—From the *Meleager*, but not (according to the Scholiast) the first words. It went on: "Left one deed undone, Praising not Artemis."

P. 91, l. 1244, Great Zeus in heaven, &c.]—Opening of *Melanippe the Wise*. It went on: "Was sire to Hellen," and therefore did not really admit the ληκύθειον tag.

P. 91, l. 1247, As bunged up as your eyes.]—There are various allusions to Euripides' bodily infirmities in his extreme old age.

Pp. 92 ff., ll. 1264 ff.—Aristophanes parodying Aeschylus is not nearly as brilliant and funny as when parodying Euripides. The lines here are all actual lines of Aeschylus: a refrain is made of a line which is good sense when first used, but easily relapses into gibberish. The plays quoted are, in order, the *Myrmidons*, *Raisers of the Dead*, *Telephus* (?), *Priestesses*, *Agamemnon* (v. 104); then, for the cithara songs, *Agamemnon* (v. 109), *Sphinx*, *Agamemnon* (v. 111), *Sphinx* (?), *Thracian Women*.

P. 94, l. 1294, War towards Aias.]—Obscure and perhaps corrupt.

P. 94, l. 1296, Was it from Marathon, &c.]—"Did you find that sort of stuff growing in the marsh of Marathon when you fought there?" Aeschylus answers: "Never you mind where I got it. It was from a decent place!" The metre of the song, and presumably the music, is Stesichorean.

P. 94, l. 1308, No Lesbian.]—*I.e.* she is very unlike the



simple old Lesbian music of Sappho and Alcaeus; but there may be a further allusion to the supposed improprieties of Lesbian women.

P. 94, l. 1309, Ye halcyons, &c.]—This brilliant parody contains a few actual Euripidean phrases; cf. *I. T.* 1089—

“Bird of the sea rocks, of the bursting spray,  
 O halcyon bird,  
 That wheelest crying, crying, on thy way,  
 Who knoweth pain can read the tale of thee,” &c.

and *El.* 435 *seqq.*, “Where the tuneful dolphin winds his way before the dark-blue-beakèd ships.” “The shuttle’s minstrel mind” is said by the Scholiast to be from the *Meleager*.

P. 95, l. 1314, Wi-i-i-ind.]—A musical “shake.” This particular word ειλίσσω is scanned ειλιλίσσω (and actually so written in one MS.) in *El.* 437, the passage cited above; and a papyrus fragment of the *Orestes* has ὦς written ὠς with two musical notes above it. Of course the thing is common in lyric poetry, both Greek and English, but decidedly rarer in Aeschylus than in Euripides.

P. 95, l. 1323, That foot.]—The metrical foot, περιβαλλ’, an anapaest rather irregularly used: I imitate the effect in “arm-pressúre.”

P. 95, l. 1328, Cyrene.]—Not much is known of her, and that not creditable.

P. 96, l. 1331, Thou fire-hearted Night, &c.]—Cf. the solo of Hecuba (*Hec.* 68 *seqq.*). The oxymoron (“his soul no soul”) and the repetitions are very characteristic of Euripides, though common enough in Aeschylus (*e.g.* *Aesch. Suppliants*, 836 ff., where there are seven such repetitions). It is not Euripides, but Greek tragedy in general, that is hit by this criticism.

P. 97, l. 1356, Cretans take up your bows, &c.]—From Euripides' *Cretans*, according to the Scholiast, but he does not specify the lines.

P. 97, l. 1365, Bring him to the balance: the one sure test.]—This is indeed the one test—and a most important one—in which Euripides must be utterly beaten by Aeschylus. Every test hitherto has been inconclusive.

P. 101, after l. 1410, Room for the King, &c.]—I have inserted this line. There seems to be a gap of several lines in our MSS.

P. 101, l. 1413, The one's so good,]=viz. Euripides, and "I so love" Aeschylus.—Euripides was σοφός, being master of the learning, including conscious poetical theory, which had not fully entered into the ideals of the educated Athenian in Aeschylus' time.

P. 102, l. 1422, Alcibiades.]—He was now in his second exile. Appointed one of the three generals of the Sicilian expedition in 415, he was called back from his command to be tried for "impiety" (in connection with the mutilation of the Hermae). He fled and was banished; then he acted with Sparta against Athens in order to procure his recall. Upon the outbreak of the Oligarchic Revolution of 411, the fleet, which remained democratic, recalled Alcibiades. He commanded with success for three years, returned to Athens in triumph in 408, and was formally appointed Commander-in-Chief. The defeat at Notium in 406, for which his carelessness was considered responsible, caused him to be superseded, and he retired to the castles which were his private possessions in the Chersonese, maintaining an ambiguous political attitude, but on the whole friendly to Athens. He was mysteriously assassinated in 404. The divergent advice of the two poets is clear and probably

characteristic. Euripides says, "Have no dealings with such a shifty and traitorous person"; Aeschylus says "Make all the use you can, even with some risk, of every good fighter." Either view would, no doubt, suit Aristophanes, to judge from the Parabasis of this play (pp. 54-56).

P. 102, l. 1425, She loves and hates, &c.]—Said to be parodied from a line in *The Sentinels* (φρουροί) by Ion of Chios.

P. 102, l. 1434, The one so wise, &c.]—I do not think that any real distinction is drawn between σοφῶς, "wisely," and σαφῶς, "truly" or "convincingly."

P. 103, l. 1443, Where Mistrust is, &c.]—The respective lines of advice are the same as before. Euripides says, "Purge your governing bodies and keep the *morale* of the state sound"; Aeschylus says, "Fight your hardest and think of nothing but fighting."

P. 104, l. 1468, My choice shall fall, &c.]—Seems to be a tragic line.

P. 104, l. 1471, My tongue hath sworn.]—*Hippolytus*, v. 612 (see above, p. 112).

P. 105, l. 1475, "What *is* shame if" the doer feels no shame:]—From Euripides' *Aeolus*.

P. 105, l. 1477, Who knoweth if to live, &c.]—From the *Polyîdus* (cf. above, p. 80).

P. 106, l. 1482, Then never with Socrates, &c.]—A most interesting attack on the Socratic circle for lack of brains—of all charges! Plato, Critias, and "other pretty fellows" (see p. 111) in their plays and "dialogues" seemed to old stagers like Aristophanes to break "the drama's principal rules."

P. 106, ll. 1504 ff., This sword is for Cleophon.]—Viz. to kill himself with (see on Cleophon above, p. 118). The

“Board of Providers” was specially appointed to raise revenue by extraordinary means after the Sicilian disasters. Myrmex and Archenomus are otherwise unknown. Nicomachus was a legal official against whom Lysias wrote his speech, No. XXX. Adeimantus is a better known figure. A disciple of Protagoras, he was a general in 407 and in actual command at the defeat of Notium. He was appointed general again after the condemnation of those concerned in the battle of Arginusae; continued in his command next year, and held responsible, through incompetence or deliberate treachery, for the annihilation of the Athenian fleet by Lysander at Aegospotami (404).

P. 107, l. 1528, Peace go with him, &c.]—The dactylic hexameter metre is rather characteristic of Aeschylus, and so is the solemnity of these last lines—so charmingly broken by the jest at the very end.

P. 108, l. 1533, Fields of his father.]—The leader of the extreme ‘patriotic’ party was supposed to be a foreigner—of Thracian descent.



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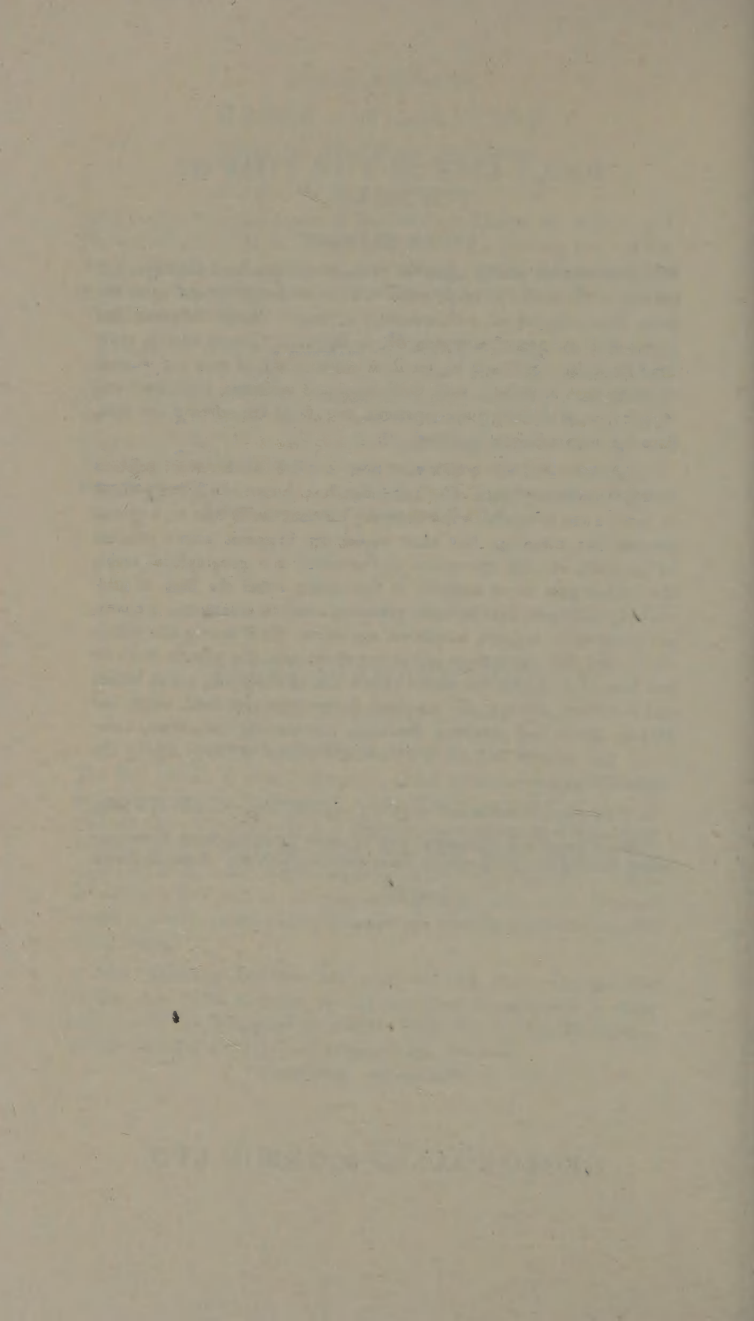
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